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# MILITARY TRAITS OF TATYA TOPE



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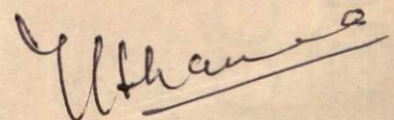
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## CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT . . . . .	ii
LIST OF SKETCHES . . . . .	viii
Chapter	
I. PRELUDE . . . . .	1
Company's strategy from business to throne. . . . .	1
Foundation of the East India Company . . . . .	1
Company's strategy takes a turn . . . . .	3
Causes of the First war of Indian independence . . . . .	8
Discontentment in Bengal army . . . . .	9
General discontentment against the administration of the Company . . . . .	12
Political discontentment - enveloping Indian sovereignty . . . . .	16
Expansionist designs - Annexation of Avadh . . . . .	20
The affair of Greased Cartridge . . . . .	21
Planning, preparation and outbreak of the First war of Indian independence . . . . .	22
Bithur seeds out the plan. . . . .	23
Flaming the first war . . . . .	26
Outbreak at Meerut . . . . .	27
Luminaries of the struggle . . . . .	30



Chapter	Page
II. MAKING OF TATYA . . . . .	39
Birth and family . . . . .	39
Education and early life . . . . .	40
Bearing and personality. . . . .	41
Early Career and Character . . . . .	42
III. MILITARY ADVISER AND PLANNER . . . . .	45
Tatya's statecraft and diplomacy . . . . .	45
Tatya with Nana on tours. . . . .	45
Advises and plans for the great struggle. . . . .	46
Formulating encounters . . . . .	52
Battle of Fatehpur . . . . .	53
Battle of Aung and Pandu Nadi . . . . .	56
Battle of Kanpur (Ahirwan). . . . .	60
Squeezing Gwalior . . . . .	68
Besieging Charkhari . . . . .	69
IV. ADMINISTRATOR, LOGISTICIAN AND TACTICIAN . . . . .	74
Military organization . . . . .	74
Tatya's military organization. . . . .	75
Military espionage . . . . .	76
Tatya's military espionage . . . . .	78
Battlecraft and battle arrays . . . . .	79
Administration of supplies - production, procurement and distribution of logistics. . . . .	82
Tactical doctrine and its application . . . . .	85



Chapter	Page
V. STRATEGIST AND GENERAL . . . . .	90
Stratagem and Generalship . . . . .	90
Campaign in North . . . . .	91
Battle of Bithur . . . . .	92
Battle of Kanpur (Nov. 27, 1857) . . .	96
Battle of Kanpur (Dec. 6, 1857). . . .	103
Campaign in Bundelkhand . . . . .	108
Battle of Betwa . . . . .	108
Battle of Kunch . . . . .	112
Campaign in Central India . . . . .	115
Battle of Morar . . . . .	117
Battle of Kota-ki-Sarai . . . . .	120
VI. GREAT GUERILLA . . . . .	129
The strategy of Guerilla warfare . . . .	129
Indian traditions in guerilla warfare . . .	130
Tatya turns as a guerilla - how and why?. .	131
British encirclement . . . . .	133
Guerilla engagements . . . . .	133
Tatya towards Jaipur and his attack on Tonk . . . . .	133
Tatya towards Udaipur . . . . .	134
Tatya towards Jhalrapatan and Indore. .	135
Period of uncertainty . . . . .	136
Tatya crosses Narbada . . . . .	137
Tatya's bold bid to seize Baroda . . .	138



Chapter	Page
VII. LAST DAYS . . . . .	142
Tatya's hasty operations . . . . .	142
Tatya into the jungles of Paron . . . . .	143
The misfortune - Man Singh's betrayal. . . . .	144
Tatya Topa's capture . . . . .	145
The sentence - analysed . . . . .	146
The trial of Tatya Topa. . . . .	146
Execution of Tatya Topa. . . . .	147
Was the sentence justified?. . . . .	147
Was Tatya really hanged?. . . . .	148
VIII. ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION . . . . .	154
Personality . . . . .	154
Nationalism . . . . .	155
Leadership . . . . .	157
Achievements . . . . .	158
Had India had more Tatyas?. . . . .	161
BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	163



# LIST OF SKETCHES

Sketch	Page
1. Deployment of Tatya Tope's troops (June 26, 1857). . . . .	49
2. Battle of Kanpur (Ahirwan) (July 16, 1857). . . . .	61
3. Battle of Bithur (August 16, 1857). . . . .	93
4. Tatya Tope's deployment of troops (November 17, 1857). . . . .	97
5. Battle of Kanpur (November 27, 1857). . . . .	99
6. Battle of Kanpur (December 6, 1857) . . . . .	104
7. Battle of Betwa (April 1, 1858). . . . .	109
8. Battle of Kunch (May 7, 1858) . . . . .	113
9. Battle of Kota-ki-Sarai (June 17, 1858). . . . .	121
10. Tatya Tope's Guerilla Engagements. . . . .	134
(from June 21, 1858, onwards)	



## CHAPTER I

### PRELUDE

#### COMPANY'S STRATEGY FROM BUSINESS TO THRONE

In 1579, during the reign of Akbar, the first Englishman Jesuit Father Thomas Stevens from Oxford, set foot in India.<sup>1</sup> He was followed by a batch of English traders in 1583, led by merchant John Newbery. They were sent by Merchant Adventurers to report on what could be bought and sold in Asia. One of the member of this probe body Mr. Ralph Fitch returned to England in 1591 after collecting useful information on possibilities of trade with India.

#### Foundation of the East India Company :

*The information recorded by Ralph*  
Fitch led to the formation of an association in 1599 under the auspices of Merchant Adventurers. But because of political considerations, not to break peace with Spain and Portugal, the association's petition for "a warrant to fit out three ships, and export bullion, and also for a charter of privileges" was not acceded to, although, as an alternative, and embassy in the person of John Mildenhall was sent with a letter from the queen to the Emperor Akbar,<sup>2</sup> but he could reach Agra in 1603 via the land route - Kandahar - and somehow succeeded in obtaining a firman from Indian Emperor.<sup>3</sup>

The actual regular progress of British trade with India started on December 31, 1600, when Queen Elizabeth signed the Royal charter captioned "The Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies".<sup>4</sup> After the grant of the Royal charter, the company sent Capt. Hawkins who landed at Surat in 1608. He appeared in Emperor



Jahangir's court and presented him a letter from King James I<sup>5</sup> for grant of trade facilities. Emperor Jahangir was kind enough to honour his letter and permitted Englishmen to settle at Surat. However, the Portuguese could manoeuvre cancellation of this permission at the Mughol<sup>a</sup> Court. In 1612, Capt. Thomas Best defeated the Portuguese fleet off Swally near Surat. This resulted in the decline of Portuguese<sup>is</sup> influence and the Britons were permitted to set up a factory at Surat.

Though the British established a factory at Masulipatam, but due to the Dutch rivalry this factory could not function properly and they had to establish another factory at Armagaon in 1626. England<sup>ish</sup> obtained the 'Golden Firman' from the Sultan of Golkunda in 1632 enabling them to trade freely in ports belonging to the kingdom of Golkunda on payment of duty worth 500 Pagodes a year, thus English regained their position at Masulipatam. The English were able to obtain a site on lease at Madras and a permission to setup a fortified factory called Fort St. George in 1639-40. Madras was given the status of Presidency in 1652 and in 1658 all the English settlements in Bengal, Biher, Orissa and on Coromandel coast were brought under its control, and thus Madras had the privilege of being the first Presidency town in India.

Simultaneously, in the north-east, English had established a factory at Hariharpur and at Balasore in 1633. A factory was established at Hugli in 1651 with subordinate agencies at Kasim Bazar<sup>and</sup> Patna. Thanks to Shah Jahan's personal pleasure at nation's cost through which English fetched Emperor's permission for free trade in Bengal and to establish factories there; English ships were also permitted to visit Hugli. All these concessions were granted by the Emperor, to Surgeon Mr. Gabriel Boughton who cured Emperor's daughter.



In 1661 King Charles II married Catherine of Braganza, and Bombay was presented to the king in dowry by the Portuguese. The king leased out the town to East India Company at an annual rent of £ 10. The conspicuous position of Bombay enabled the company to control entire coastal trading of the region. As it was outside the limits of Mughal empire, it could be easily fortified and defended. In 1687, it was raised to the Presidency status.

Company's strategy takes a turn :

With the passing of time the Company's policy also changed. A peaceful trading body was transformed into a power eager for territorial expansions, taking advantage of country's political disorders. Gerald Aungier, who in 1669 succeeded Sir George Oxenden as President at Surat and Governor of Bombay, wrote to the court of directors "the times now require you to manage your general commerce with the sword in your hands".<sup>6</sup> Within few years the ~~xxxxxxx~~ Directors approved the Company's policy and wrote to the chief at Madras in December 1687, "to establish such a political of civil and military power, and create and secure such a large revenue to secure both... as may be the foundation of a large, well grounded, secure English dominion in India for all time to come".<sup>7</sup> Accordingly Sir John Child blockaded Bombay and the Mughal ports on the western coast and seized many Mughal vessels. But the English had underestimated the force of the Mughal empire. Sir John Child at last appealed for pardon to Aurangzeb. In February 1690, Aurangzeb granted pardon to the Company on its promise to restore all the captured Mughal ships along with a penalty worth Rs. 1.5 Lacs.

Though in Bengal, the Company was granted certain trade concessions by the Emperor, yet at times there arose some



disputes between the company and the local officials. Therefore, the company "decided to protect themselves by force".<sup>8</sup> In 1686, company tried to sie<sup>g</sup>de Hugli by force, but failed miserably, because it was no match for the Aurangzeb's might; and the English were completely driven away. They took shelter at Sutanati (one the site of the modern Calcutta). Mr. Job Charnock, who had managed to escape from the Imperial onslaught, opened negotiations for permission to build a factory at the site, which he finally got in 1690. In 1696 Company secured permission to fortify the factory at Calcutta. The fort at Calcutta was named Fort William. In 1700 Calcutta was made a separate presidency.

Thus, by the end of the 17th Century, the English East India Company had three presidencies in India, independent of each other -viz- Madras (1652), Bombay (1687) and Calcutta (1700). In those days Indian powers were weak in maritime strength, whereas the English had full control over three centres on sea<sup>x</sup>openings, which provided them great superiority over their Indian counterparts, because they could always manage to get reinforcements through the sea routes.

In 1715, a delegation led by John Surman paid a visit to Emperor Farrukhsiyar's court. With the help of Dr. William Hamilton, who cured the ill Emperor, Surman secured three firmans in July 1717. By these firmans English could trade in Bengal only on an annual payment of Rs. 3,000/-. They were also ex<sup>x</sup>empted from the payment of all customs and duties at Surat, hithert<sup>in</sup> paid by them, in return for an annual sum of Rs. 10,000/-. Further to it coins of the Company, minted at Bombay, were validated as currency throughout the Mughal Empire.

On June 23, 1757, Col. Clive managed to defeat Siraj-ud-Daule's forces (at<sup>in</sup> the Battle of Plassey. This victory was of supreme



importance in the growth of British power in India. It made the British defacto rulers of Bengal, one of the wealthiest parts of India, the resources of which were used to destroy the French power in Carnatic.<sup>9</sup> As a result of this victory the Company became kingmaker in Bengal and managed to get Zemindari rights over 24 Parganas (880 sq. miles of territory) north of Calcutta with an estimated revenue of £ 1,50,000; and thus the Company transformed itself into a Fendel state.

In October 1764, Major Hector Munro finally defeated the Imperial troops at the Battle of Buxar. This victory cemented the victory achieved at Plassey. Hence forward the British were unchallenged rulers of Bengal. In May 1765, Clive returned to India as Governor of Bengal for the second time. By the treaty of Allahabad he restored Avadh to Shuja-ud-Daula on payment of 50 Lacs of rupees with the exception of two districts of Kora and Allahabad, which were handed over to the Emperor Shah Alam. In return to this gesture, on August 12, 1765 the Emperor granted to the Company Diwani rights (rights to collect and administer the revenues) in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa on a promise by the Company that it will pay an annual tribute of 26 Lacs of rupees to the Emperor.

In 1773, British Government enacted the Regulating Act to manage the affairs of the East India Company, which may be described as the foundation stone of the British Rule in India.<sup>10</sup> In 1774 Warren Hastings was appointed as first Governor-general. He devoted himself to strengthen the foundation of British dominion in India. He developed a subsidiary alliance system by which he hired out<sup>11</sup> Company's army to Indian ruler i.e. Avadh, on payment of money in the Rohilla War. The policy of subsidiary alliances was later on followed by Lord Wallesley on a large scale. This policy, in fact, facilitated the expansion of the British paramountcy in India.

Though Warren Hastings was averse to projects of conquest and



he did not crush the power of Sultans of Mysore, Haider Ali and Tipu Sahib, in the first and second Mysore wars, he made the Company's sword respected from Delhi to Cape Comorin.<sup>12</sup> By the time Hastings left India, the bases of British economic and political dominance were firmly laid, and all was ready for the march of British power.<sup>13</sup>

In accordance with Pitts India act of 1784, both Cornwallis (1786-1793) and his successor Sir John Shore (1793-1798) followed a policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the native states. To this there were two exceptions. Cornwallis<sup>a</sup> was forced to wage a series of wars against Tipu Sahib of Mysore. After initial reverses, Cornwallis in 1792, advanced to the walls of Seringapatam and Tipu had to surrender half of his dominions, pay an indemnity of more than £ 3,000,000 and deliver his two sons as hostages. Neither can it be contended that the policy of Cornwallis and Shore towards Avedh was one of non-intervention, for they recognized that some control of this buffer state was essential. Shore even found it necessary to depose its ruler Wazir Ali, because he was hostile to British interests.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere Shore's policy was one of the unenterprising neutrality.

It was during the <sup>G</sup>governor-generalship of Lord Wallesley (1798-1805) that further territorial gains were made, and the map of India was redrawn. The Country now lay at his feet. The Marathas, the Nizam and the Mysore powers which had been so important in the politics of the country, had now all entered into a subsidiary alliance with the British. Wallesley had also annexed a number of small kingdoms : Tanjore, Surat, Carnatic and some part of Avedh etc. Wallesley had been asked not to interfere in the state politics. But he had found that only a forward policy was possible in India. He struck well and painted large portions of the country red, bringing them under Company's control. The policy of subsidiary



alliance enabled the company to station its forces in several native states, which were to be paid by the Indian rulers, while they were governed by the Company. Thus the subsidiary alliance system "helped the company throw forward its military frontiers in advance of its political frontiers and also enabled it to maintain a considerable force at the expense of the native rulers, while keeping wars away from its own territories".<sup>15</sup> The British empire saw its greatest expansion in India under Wellesley. It may be noted that in 1798 the Company's possessions were limited to the island of Bombay and strips of land around Calcutta and Madras. In 1805, it was master of nearly whole <sup>of</sup> the country.<sup>16</sup>

Although Lord Hastings (1813-1823) came with the intention of continuing the <sup>of</sup> policy of his predecessor, but in his own words he found himself confronted with "several different quarrels likely to demand the decision of arms".<sup>17</sup> By treaty of Segauli (1816) the Gurkhas were forced to cede Gharwal and Kumaun together with most of Tarai. They also agreed to withdraw from Sikkim and to accept a British resident at Kathmandu. Between 1817-1819, the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur and Berar was overthrown and part of his territory annexed. The Peshwa of Poona was also liquidated and his large territories were taken over by the company. The Sindhia of Gwalior and the Holkar of Indore, though left in enjoyment of their ~~states~~ states, were brought under Company's influence. Thus ~~Lord~~ Lord Hastings brought large territories to Company's folds.

The Charter Act of 1833 abolished the trading activities of the Company and henceforth it became a purely administrative body under the crown.

Lord William Bentinck (1828-1835) departed from the policy ~~of~~ of "let alone" and in 1831 he took over the administration ~~of~~ of Mysore. The ~~principality~~ principality of Cachar was annexed in August, 1832 and Coorg was annexed in May 1834. The lands of the



Raja of Jaintia in Assam was incorporated in the British empire in March, 1835.

Lord Auckland (1836-1842) annexed the territory of the Nawab of Karnul, in Madras, on suspicion of his hostile designs against the Company's interests.

Lord Ellenborough (1842-1844) annexed Sindh without any justification in August 1843. On December 29, 1843, Company's troops defeated Gwalior troops in two engagements - one at Maharajpur and the other at Paniar. The Gwalior was reduced to the status of a protected state, and placed under the care of company's resident, who was to manage its affairs during the minority of the Maharaja. Company's troops numbering 10,000 were also posted there.

With Dalhousie's (1848-1856) coming at the helm of the affairs of the company, the last important phase in this imperial expansion started. On March 30, 1849, he annexed Punjab by a proclamation. A large number of states were annexed in vigorous pursuence of the "Doctrine of Lapse",<sup>18</sup> such as Satara (1848), Jaipur and Sambhalpur (1849), Baghat (1850), Udaipur (1852), Nagpur (1853) and Jhansi (1854) etc. Berar was annexed on the ground of the inability of the Nizam to pay arrears due to the company in May 1853. Avadh<sup>19</sup> was annexed on the ground of misgovernment on February 13, 1856. "State after state was thus swallowed up by the voracious appetite of the East India Company's rulers in India and by 1856 the company had become the suzerain power in India".<sup>20</sup>

#### CAUSES OF THE FIRST WAR OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

The first war of Indian Independence, <sup>o</sup>accidentally termed as Sepoy Mutiny, was the outcome of manifold circumstances put together, as a result of Company's policy not only to change the political complexion of this great nation but also



threatening its nationhood including the social and cultural setup. The causes of this war of independence, in brief, may be captioned and clarified as under :

Discontentment in Bengal Army :

Many factors contributed to the bringing up of discontent in the Bengal Army. The important factors leading to the widespread discontent in Bengal Army may be listed as follows with a brief elaboration :

(a) Withdrawal of option about overseas service :

Primarily Bengal Army consisted of high caste natives - Brahmans and Rajputs, who were orthodoxly devoted to their religious belief and customs, as a result at times there were contradictory situations to handle them for military purpose alike European troops. Mr. P.E. Roberts has rightly observed - The Bengal Army, unlike the Madras and Bombay Armies, was always difficult to handle because of the high caste men, Brahmans and Rajputs.<sup>21</sup> On two occasions (1824 and 1852) the high caste Bengal sepoy had refused to cross the sea, because their customs forbade to make a sea-voyage and this custom had with them the force of law. The sepoy of the Bengal Army had mostly been enlisted on terms which did not compel them to render overseas service. Lord Dalhousie had decided that the existing rights should not be interfered with, and he scrupulously respected the contract. Lord Canning thought that while the existing sepoys could continue to enjoy their ~~contract~~ contract, the future recruits need not be given any such option. By General Enlistment Act of 1856 new recruits would have to render overseas services, and <sup>if</sup> anyone did not like this condition, he was free to refuse enlistment. But having been once enlisted, a sepoy would have to be ready for service both within and outside India.



Of course this act did not effect the existing penal of the sepoys, but they felt that the avenue to military service would be closed to their sons because the new recruit had no other option but to forego his paternal profession or to give up his religions. This had also its adverse effect on the general population who thought it to be another step towards the propagation of Christianity.

(b) Service in Afghanistan :

During the first Afghan War (1839-42) the sepoys of the Bengal Army were taken to Kabul. Under the terms of their enlistment they were exempted to undertake a journey by sea, but Kabul did not mean the crossing of the sea, therefore, they could not legitimately claim exemption from Kabul expedition, though their destination lay outside India. They apprehended that by going in far off land they would suffer expulsion from their caste, because in Afghanistan they could not perform their daily ablutions and had to purchase food from Muslim shop-keepers against their will, which was in contravention to their religious belief. So on returning home, they found themselves ex-communicated for breach of caste rules and even their brother sepoys refused to dine or smoke with them.

Apprehensive of the loss of caste many sepoys, who had not yet been required to march across the Indus or to go to Afghanistan, obtained their discharge and many others deserted.

(c) No avenues of promotion :

The native sepoys of the army had few chances of promotion. In the Bengal Army a man secured his promotion by seniority so long as he avoided any public crime, merit and fitness were not the criterion.<sup>22</sup> As a result of promotion by seniority, very old men formed the senior



group in Bengal. The system of promotion was adopted on the assumption that it was safe to keep old and inactive men at the top and the young energetic soldiers in the junior ranks,<sup>23</sup> not that they lacked ability. The post of the Indian commandant was abolished in 1785 at all the Presidencies and upto 1825 Subedar was the highest rank to which a native could rise. Even though the rank of Subedar-major was introduced in 1826, the prestige and pay attached to his office was no match to that of the commandant and even the new rank could be attained by negligible percentage.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the able sepoys laboured under a sense of frustration and this factor too, to a certain degree contributed to the widening of the discontent.

(d) Pay and allowances of Sepoys :

The major cause of commotion among the Indian sepoys of the army was that their pay and allowances were much less than those of the European troops. The pay of a native Subedar of the Regiment in the regular army was Rs. 67/-, a month, with an additional allowance of Rs. 25/-. Thus, Rs. 92/- was the highest pay enjoyable by an infantryman in those days. The private sepoys received Rs. 7/- per month in all stationary situations, and rupees <sup>e</sup>eight and a half while marching on the field exclusive of half a rupee per month allotted to the off Reckoning fund. With this pay and allowance sepoy had to pay for his uniform and after meeting the cost of his ration account with the regimental bania (the amount was deducted from his pay), he received on the pay day no more than a rupee and a half, sometimes a few annas only.<sup>25</sup> The sowar received higher pay varying from Rs. 21/- to Rs. 30/-, but he was not much better off than the sepoy because of many more deductions.

The pay scales were not the same in the three Presidencies. The Bombay and Madras sepoys received more pay than the



Bengal sepoys. The sepoys had a further grievance on account of the stoppage of the Bhatta allowance for service in far-off places which they used to receive previously.

(e) Unofficer-like behaviour of European officers :

The commissioned officers often insulted the senior Indian soldiers and havaldars, and treated them roughly. Vilest abuses and objectionable epithets were used by officers in their anger. On the top of all this, the sepoy did not get fair play if he made a legitimate complaint to the Adjutant against the regimental Sergeant. The Adjutant took little notice of the complaints.

General discontentment against the administration of the Company :

Officials of the East India Company ignored time honoured customs of the Indians and paid no heed to what the people of the country thought, which developed an intense anti-British feelings and discontent in the masses. The most important factors may be listed as follows :

(a) Tampering with Religious beliefs :

Resentment against the British had been building up gradually over the years in all the walks of society on account of various factors. Civil population and sepoy both feared that the government was intent to Christianize them. Proselytising activities of Christian missionaries were on increase as the Charter Act of 1813 had thrown India open to all private individuals. The missionaries were running schools with the aim of popularising Christianity, and were doing their work in hospitals and in prisons. Immediately following the Charter Act (1813) came the reforms of Lord William Bentinck who prohibited the practice of Sati in 1829. Although he had the support of enlightened Hindu opinion



led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore, but they formed a microscopic minority. "The abolition of Sati not only gave offence to the Hindu masses in general, but it caused some disquiet in the Muslim mind as well. If the Christian Government could interfere with Hindu customs and practices with impunity, they asked themselves, how long would they leave the Muslim alone".<sup>26</sup> The convert's Inheritance Act (Act XXI of 1850) enabled the converts to inherit ancestral property. Before this act such converts were, under their personal law, excluded from inheritance. The Hindus and Muslims regarded this measure as an incentive to Christianity.

Next in the sequence was the Hindu widows Remarriage Act, which was against the socio-cultural religion of Hindus and thus in the contemporary society, it may be said that the East India Company constantly adopted measures to Christianize India. The chairman of the Directors of the East India Company, Mr. Mangles, said in the House of Commons in 1857 :

Providence has entrusted the extensive empire of Hindustan to England in order that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other. Everyone must exert all his strength that there may be no dilatoriness on any account in continuing in the country the grand work of making all India Christian.<sup>27</sup>

(b) Shabby behaviour of Englishmen against Indians :

Almost every Englishman in India carried a deep-rooted contempt for Indians. Lieut Verney of the Shannon observes :

"The English residents generally appear to me very prejudiced against the natives, and show this in their behaviour... I think that the cause of the mutiny may be that in every British mind in India contempt for the natives is deeply rooted. When a kindness is done to a native by an Englishman, it is often accompanied by a contemptuous thought which



appears only too clearly in the countenance, the terms in which I have heard even clergymen and others, who would desire to do good to the Hindoos, speak of them, convinces me that this is the case, it must be most trying to a people who consider us as outcasts.<sup>28</sup>

Sir W.H. Russell mentions "racial arrogance" of the English employees of the East India Company, including military personnel, as the primary cause of the uprising. Gradually, this treatment created a corresponding hatred in the Indian mind towards Englishmen in general. The dividing gulf between the ruler and the ruled had become total. According to William Howard Russell, the war correspondent of the London 'Times' :

There is no bond of union between the two, in language, or faith, or nationality. The west rules, collects taxes, gives balls, drives carriages, attends races, goes to Church, improves its roads, builds its theatres, forms its masonic lodges, holds Cutchery, and drinks its pale ale. The east pays taxes in the shape of what it eats grown on taxed land, grumbles, propagates, squabbles, sits in its decaying temples, haunts its rotting shrines, washes in its fealing tank and drinks its semi-putrid water. Between the two there is a great gulf fixed.<sup>29</sup>

(c) Exclusion of Indians from higher appointments :

W.H. Russell observes - "Not a little of the Indian discontent was caused by the systematic exclusion of the natives from official employment of a superior character".<sup>30</sup> The highest office to which the ablest Indian could aspire was that of a Deputy Collector in the executive side, and of Sadar-amin (civil judge) in the judicial side. Therefore, talented people and highest classes of society felt the humiliation of their new positions. Long back in 1813, Sir Thomas Munro had written to the Governor-General - "Foreign conquerors have treated the natives with violence and often with great cruelty, but none has treated them with so much scorn as we, none has stigmatized the whole people as



unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty and as fit to be employed only where we can not do without them. It seems to be not only ungenerous, but impolitic to debase the character of a people fallen under our domain".<sup>31</sup>

(d) Sales of Land :

With the British administrative reforms, the feudalistic structure of society was completely changed, and it affected almost all classes and their age-old professions. Robertson, Magistrate of Saharanpur, observes :

There is nothing amongst the agricultural population that creates a greater hatred of our rule than the facilities offered to the most unprincipled class of money-lenders in the world in oppressing an ignorant and careless peasantry... I found that no class seem to have acted with so vindictive a hate against us as the smaller class of landholders whom the banyans had dispossessed through the medium of our courts.<sup>32</sup>

Under the old system, a defaulter land holder was seized and kept under duress till his kith and kin paid the revenue. Thus for all practicable purposes, land was inalienable. The Company's Government adopted the system of selling the defaulter's land, which resulted commonly in dispossession of landholders particularly because Company's officers over-assessed the revenue, which the land holders could not pay. So long as the Zamindar had family jewels and horses etc., he would sell them to retain his ancestral land, because loss of the land was not merely a financial loss, it affected his social status as well. When done up, he had no escape-route from ejectment. Thus an influential section of the society was enraged against the rulers.

The new law of sales of land caused equal hardship to the peasant as well. Being in chronic debt to the Baniya, he lost his fields to him in satisfaction of money decrees.



Thus the Zamindar and the peasant both, who had suffered, joined hands for ousting the Britons.

Political discontentment + enveloping Indian sovereignty :

After the battle of Plassey (1757) the power hungry Britishers tried to change the political complexion of this great nation. In this process the rival French imperialists were squeezed to almost non-entity, Hyder Ali's resistance had been negatived, the Afghans stood humbled, the sturdy little Gurkhas subdued and Burma annexed. The Emperor of Delhi was now a mere pensioner, and the Marathas - once, the flying force which had over run the country, had been laid low. But the Company's appetite to envelop Indian sovereignty never came to an end. Dalhousie saw favourable conditions for the expansion of his authority, therefore, he opted to over-act for swift gains through injustice and oppression. He affirmed that he "will level the land of Hindusthen".<sup>33</sup>

(a) Disregard to Bahadur Shah :

Taking advantage of the political condition of India, the Company opted to turn itself into an imperial force having obtained various authorities and concessions from the Mughal Emperors. Primarily they were crooked businessmen, therefore, with a view to extract maximum concessions they presented themselves to be the most submissive subjects before the king. But later on they started ignoring the time-honoured customs and "in 1835 the coinage which ever since 1778 had purported to have been issued in the nineteenth regnal year of Shah Alam, was replaced by the Company's rupee bearing the English monarch's image and superscription".<sup>34</sup>

In 1837, Bahadur Shah II succeeded his father as the last Emperor of India, practically as a pensioner and puppet, while de-facto governing authority was the British East India Company. The practice of presenting Nazar<sup>35</sup> was abolished by Lord Ellenborough,<sup>36</sup> and the Emperor now



had no option but to s<sup>w</sup>allow the insult. Further to it, against all traditions and provisions of the treaty which Bahadur Shah's grand father Shah Alam had entered with the Britishers, the latter decided to abolish the imperial title with the demise of the existing Emperor.<sup>37</sup> It was nothing but an insult to injury which was naturally resented by the Emperor. In 1849, the Emperor's eldest son Dara Bakht, heir apparent died.

Emperor Bahadur Shah II, under the influence of queen Zinat Mahal, desired that he be succeeded by Jewan Bakht, because the natural heir-apparent Fakr-ud-din was not liked by him. Therefore, taking advantage of this family rift, the Resident conspired with Fakr-ud-din<sup>38</sup> and entered with him in a treaty which could not remain a secret for long and its contents were resented by most of the Indian princes. In 1856, Fakr-ud-din died.<sup>39</sup> The Emperor requested the resident that, in his lifetime, he desired to see that Jewan Bakht succeeds him. For this purpose he submitted a signed and sealed request to this effect by all of his other living sons. Mirza Mu<sup>h</sup>ammad Korash, the eldest son lodged a complaint against the Emperor's request stating that he had to sign under duress and claimed to be recognised as the natural successor. Now again the Britishers taking advantage of the family rift informed Mirza Korash that he can be recognised as head of the royal family after the death of his father on the conditions agreed with Mirza Fakr-ud-din excepting that he will be given the <sup>i</sup>little of Shahzadeh<sup>40</sup> instead of king.

This was taken as a utter disregard to his authority by Emperor Bahadur Shah II and he desired to settle his accounts with the arrogant Britishers, and most probably with this personal attitude he agreed to take part in the First war of India's Independance.



(b) Doctrine of lapse :

In fact for various reasons mentioned above, resentment against the British rule had been building up over the years in all stratas of society. To cap it all came the 'Doctrine of Lapse' which toppled small kingdoms and principalities like houses of cards, and it, more than anything else, caused widespread discontent.

The doctrine of lapse meant that in case of lack of natural heirs to a throne, the states under Company's suzerainty were to lapse to the paramount power, that is, the Company.<sup>41</sup> The widely prevalent practice of adopting a son to succeed the ruler would not be recognised by the East India Company. In exceptional cases, the company may grant permission to an adopted son to succeed the throne as a special mark of favour. This doctrine, being against the Hindu personal law, caused discontentment amongst the issueless rulers, because they, under this law, could not have an adopted son to succeed them.

This doctrine was not Dalhousie's creation. It was laid down by the Court of Directors in England as early as in 1834.<sup>42</sup> But Dalhousie applied this doctrine in all cases and did not care for the traditions or religious sentiments of Indian rulers.

Satara :

The principality of Satara was the first to fall prey to the doctrine of lapse. The Satara principality was carved out of the Peshwa's territories with a view to conciliate the Marathas.<sup>43</sup> Its ruler Pratap Singh was a good administrator. He was made a member of the Royal Asiatic Society of England and in 1835 a jewelled sword along with a certificate was sent to honour him, but these things remained undelivered as the relations between him and the Governor of Bombay presidency had become strained.



The latter had charged the former with sedition for attempting to overthrow the Company's rule and was deposed in September 1839, without being given an opportunity to explain the things. His younger brother Shahji Appa Saheb was nominated to succeed Pratep Singh. Shahji Appa Saheb adopted a son just before his death in April 1848. Dalhousie refused to recognize this adoption because his sanction was not taken before and brought the principality under the Company's rule. "The annexation of Satara became a predisposing cause of the outbreak of 1857".<sup>44</sup>

#### Nagpur :

In 1853, the Raja of Nagpur Raghoji Bhonsla died without adopting any son before his death. However, he had directed his queen to adopt a son, and she adopted Yaswant Rao. Under Hindu Law such an adoption is perfectly valid. But the succession was not approved and his state was absorbed into the Company's empire, in pursuance of the doctrine of lapse.

It was <sup>not</sup> only the principle, but its disgraceful application, which turned the inhabitants and native rulers against the British. Kaye describes the proceedings thus :

The live stock and dead stock of the Bonslah were sent to the hammer. It must have been the <sup>g</sup>reat day for speculative cattle-dealers at Seetabaldee when the royal elephants, horses, and bullocks were sold off at the price of carrion... the furniture was removed, and the jewels of the Bonslah family... were sent to the Calcutta market. And I have heard it said that these seizures, these sales, created a worse impression not only in Berar, but in the surrounding provinces, than the seizer of the kingdom itself.<sup>45</sup>

#### Jhansi :

Jhansi had been ceded by Peshwa Baji Rao II to the East India Company in 1817, and Lord Hastings nominated Ram Chandra Rao as ruler <sup>of</sup> Jhansi by a treaty with the right



of succession in perpetuity. Ram Chandra Rao died in 1835. His adopted son was not recognised and Raghunath Rao<sup>46</sup> was put to the throne. The latter was succeeded by Gangadhar Rao, who, before his death in 1853, adopted Anand Rao as his son and requested the company to recognise him<sup>47</sup> as such. But Dalhousie refused to acknowledge the adoption<sup>48</sup> and Jhansi lapsed to the paramount power.

Similarly Jeitpur, Sambhalpur, Baghat, Udaipur and numerous other small states were annexed under the doctrine of lapse.

#### Expansionist designs - Annexation of Avadh :

<sup>Whatever</sup> Whether little faith the native rulers had in British justice died with the annexation of Avadh in February 1856. The East India Company decided that the Nawab of Avadh should be deposed and the State completely annexed. The Nawabs of Avadh had been faithful and loyal to the Company since 1765 and had rendered valuable assistances to them. But, on the alleged grounds of misrule and tyranny of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, Avadh was annexed to the Company's dominions<sup>49</sup>. Nawab now sought his way to reside at Calcutta as ordained by the Company and passed his rest of life as a pensioner.

The annexation of Avadh was totally unjustified. The Hindu Patriot commented :

The Oude (Avadh) Durbar are not charged with rejecting advice tendered by our Government on any specific occasion. Had they done so and gross misgovernment been manifest in any part of the Oude territories, it would have afforded occasion for the temporary <sup>S</sup>sequestration, as provided for by treaty, of a portion of the king's territories. This has not been done, and we may therefore reasonably infer that, in the eyes of our Govt. at least no such gross misgovernment exists.<sup>49</sup>

This clearly indicates that Company's policy of annexation was not based on any principle. The doctrine of lapse itself ~~had no limits in its applicability and whenever it was not applicable 'the good of the people' or 'gross misrule' were~~



had no limits in its applicability and whenever it was not applicable 'the good of the people' or 'gross misrule' were substituted in its place.

The annexation of Avadh shattered faith of other princes and privileged classes, who, previously did not take any notice of the annexations under the doctrine of lapse, "If the British Government dethrones a king who has ever been so faithful to them, what independent nawab or rajah is safe"?<sup>50</sup> Britishers were already "regarded by the natives as trespassers and this feeling was intensified on the annexation of the province of Oudh".<sup>51</sup>

The annexation of Indian States had another repercussion too. The disbanded soldiers of the ex-rulers' troops were amongst the most discontented persons who took a leading part in the first war of Indian Independence, because they had lost their livelihood.

#### The affair of Greased Cartridge :

Several factors which have been discussed above, generated fumes of discontent among the sepoys and the civilians, the bursting of which into a devouring flame could have been delayed but for the greased cartridge, which ignited the accumulated bundle of grievances of the sepoys like a spark on dry timber.

In 1856, it was decided to replace the old Brown Bess musket with the new Enfield rifle which had a much longer range and greater accuracy, but to facilitate rapid loading the Enfield cartridges were greased with animal fat, and the soldier had to put the cartridges into his mouth and bite off its end. The news about the cartridge being greased with the fat of pigs and cows started from Dum Dum, the great arsenal and a training centre, specialising in the use of the new rifle to Indian troops. This news soon spread like a wildfire amongst



all the sepoys of the Bengal Army, and they saw this as an attempt to break their caste as a preamble for their conversion to Christianity. According to Keye : "Government had manufactured cartridges, greased with animal fat, for the use of the Native Army and the statement was not a lie".<sup>52</sup>

The sepoys at Dum Dum lodged a protest in January, 1857 that the mixture employed for greasing the cartridges was hurt to their religious beliefs. The British military authorities could not finally make up their mind as to what should be the final solution of the problem, meanwhile the sepoys grew more and more uneasy and it was openly alleged that the polluted cartridge was deliberately issued to deprive them of their caste.

The matter would have been mended if the government had withdrawn the use of Enfield rifle and greased cartridge for the time being. But instead of doing so "the government resolved that the sepoys at the depots should be allowed to use any mixture they might think fit, but that the question of the state in which cartridges should be issued under other circumstances, and especially for service in the field, must remain open for further consideration".<sup>53</sup> This was ineffectual to check the growing ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ excitement, and "the cry of the cartridge brought the latent spirit of revolt into action."<sup>54</sup>

#### PLANNING, PREPARATION AND OUTBREAK OF THE FIRST WAR OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

Due to the causes already mentioned, there was a widespread discontentment among Indians against the Company's rule. Kanpur was one of the most inflammable spots in northern India. Nana Saheb who lived in Bithur was denied by the Company to inherit his title and pension. He sent Azimulla Khan to plead his case before the Board of directors of East India Company in England, but the Governor-general's decision was upheld by the directors.



Those days Rango Bapuji had been to England to plead the case of Satara principality. However, he too, like Azimulla Khan, did not succeed in his mission. Having met with disappointment both the persons prepared the map of rising,<sup>55</sup> which was to be put into action on their return to India. Sir John William Kaye Kaye has clearly stated :

Though of different race and different religion, these two men were knit together by common sympathies and kindred tasks, and in that autumn of 1853, by like failures and disappointments, to brood over, and the same bitter animosities to cherish. What was said and what was done between them no Historian can relate.<sup>56</sup>

After leaving London Rango Bapuji came back to Satara but Azimulla Khan made a tour of Europe before returning to India, to ascertain the quarters from where direct help of moral sympathy could be obtained for the forthcoming war of India's independence. He went to France where politicians assured him to provide assistance from Chandra Nagar. He met Khalifa (Sultan) of Turkey also and returned to India via Crimea. The British disaster at Sebastopol boosted his morale to practicalise his plan of India's independence.

#### Bithur seeds out the plan :

On his return to India, Azimulla Khan narrated the story of his unsuccessful efforts and briefed <sup>Nana</sup> ~~him~~ about his secret interview with Rango Bapuji. Thereupon Nana Saheb decided to make every effort to kneel down the British. "There were teeming brains and strong wills and resolute activities among the people of the Bithur Palace".<sup>57</sup> Persons like Tatya Tope, Azimulla Khan, Rao Saheb and Jwala Prasad took active part in planning the strategy of the First war of Indian Independence. Thus, Nana's palace at Bithur earned to itself the fertility to seed out the revolution.

Every revolution needs a leader and a flag. Though Mughal empire had declined, but Indians had much faith and devotion



*to the Emperor.* Therefore, it was decided that the Emperor Bahadur Shah should be made the leader of the revolution and his green flag be adopted as the flag of the revolution. Nana wrote several letters to Indian rulers against the unjust policies of the Company towards the Indian states and invited them to become co-partners in the revolution to rout out the aliens. Keye has observed :

For months, for years indeed, ever since the failure of the mission to England had been apparent, they had been quietly spreading their network of intrigue all over the country. From one Native Court to another Native Court, from one extremity to another of the great continent of India, the agents of the Nana Sahib had passed with overtures and invitations, discreetly, perhaps mysteriously, worded, to Princes and chiefs of different races and religions, but most hopefully of all to the Marathas.<sup>58</sup>

In the begining Nana got no response but when Ayadh was annexed to the Company, many rulers came forward with courage to support Nana's plan. Nana had written to Russia also and got the reply that if he could take hold Delhi then assistance would be given to him to drive the English from Calcutta.<sup>59</sup>

#### Red lotus and Chapati :

Red lotus was adopted to propel the revolution in British troops. A man appeared with a lotus flower and handed it to the chief of the regiment. He passed it on to another and when it came to last he rushed to the next station. "There was not, it appears, a detachment, not a station in Bengal, through which the lotus flower was not circulated. The circulation of this simple symbol of conspiracy was just after the annexation of Oudh".<sup>60</sup> The taking of red lotus in hand implied to participate in future national struggle and it really united the peasants and sepoys into one for the national cause. They were repeating to each other one sentiment "Sub lal hoga hi", "everything is to become red".<sup>61</sup>



Chapatis were adopted to carry the message of revolution from one village to another. With two chapatis the chowkider (Sentry) ran up from his village to another and contacted the chowkider there. He handed over the chapatis and asked him to make ten more and distribute two each to the five nearest village chowkidars with the same instructions. This chapati movement was reported to the British authorities from various quarters, but they failed to connect it with any political event - past, present or future. Though chapatis "were signals to those in the secret to hold themselves ready for some great explosion can scarcely be doubted".<sup>62</sup>

#### Propagation throughout the Country :

Thus, the message of revolution was being spread throughout the length and breadth of India to prepare the people for the great cause. Maulvi Ahmad Ullah Shah was planning against the British in Avadh. Peer Ali of Patna was trying to shake the very foundations of British empire. The letters found in Peer Ali's house disclosed an organised Muslim conspiracy to re-establish Mohammedan supremacy and to overthrow the British Government.<sup>63</sup> In Bengal also the schemes of revolution were planned. "The ministers of the king of Avadh were tampering with the troops at the Presidency and sowing dangerous lies broadcast over the length and breadth of the land".<sup>64</sup> In south Rango Bapuji and others had conspired to wage a war against the British East India Company and to attack the Cantonments of Satara, Ahmad Nagar, with a view to ~~rob~~ rob the Government treasury<sup>65</sup> to cut the tails of Company's forces.

Thus, in the whole of India secret organisations were active to overthrow the Company's rule. According to Sir Jacob :

... it is difficult to describe the wonderful secrecy with which the whole conspiracy was conducted and the forethought supplying the schemes, and the caution with which each group of conspirators worked apart, concealing the connecting links and instructing them with just sufficient information for the purpose in view. And all this was equalled only by the fidelity with which they adhered to each other.<sup>66</sup>



Nana's Tours :

After planning the pending national revolution, Nana came out of Bithur in the name of pilgrimage, to bind together various revolutionaries in different parts of the Country. He was accompanied by Tatyasaheb, Azimulla Khan, Rao Saheb and Bala Saheb. During his tour he visited many cities including Delhi, Meerut, Ambala, Lucknow, Kalpi etc. and also "the military stations all along the main trunk road".<sup>67</sup> After having met with prominent revolutionaries of Northern India, Nana returned to Bithur. He finalized the plan and fixed Sunday, 31st May 1857<sup>68</sup> as the D-Day for the First war of India's Independence.

All these preparations and whispering campaign were made so secret that the British officers remained completely ignorant of it. ~~M~~ Trevelyan writes :

...it seems indeed miraculous that our countrymen then resident in India should not have entertained a suspicion of what those months would bring forth... within a few ~~xx~~ yards of their quarters the men were debating the programme of the coming mutiny; arranging who was to shoot down the Adjutant, and who was to fire the thatch of the Colonel's bungalow; discussing their hopes of assistance from Gwalior, Nepal and St. Petersburg.<sup>69</sup>

Flaming the First War :

The first war of Indian Independence prematurely brokeout on May 10, 1857, that is twenty days in advance of the D-Day, the Meerut regiments being the first to fire the shots.

Mangal Pandey's martyrdom :

Mangal Pandey was a young sepoy of the 34th Native Infantry<sup>70</sup> stationed at Barrackpur near Calcutta. On Sunday 29th March, 1857, there was considerable excitement in the regiment that British troops were coming to disarm them on account of their protest to use the greased cartridges. Mangal Pandey excited on this account and he came out of his barrack along with his



musket and sword and invited his co-sepoys to participate<sup>71</sup> in 'Dharm Yuddha'. Seeing this, Sergeant Major Hughson ordered the sepoy to arrest him. Before anything could be done Mangal Pandey fired at the Sergeant Major. In the meantime Lieut. Baugh came on his horse, and Mangal Pandey's bullet struck the horse which brought the officer on the ground, who assisted by the Sergeant Major rushed at the assailant. Though, Mangal Pandey was a match for both of them,<sup>72</sup> but he could not kill them because Sheikh Paltoo, a Muslim sepoy had seized him by the waist.

This news like a wild-fire reached Gen. Hearsay, the officer commanding the Presidency Division. He rode to the parade ground with his two sons and the guard.<sup>73</sup> Mangal Pandey called upon his comrades to come to his aid but none responded. Visualizing his fate he tried to commit suicide. On April 6, 1857, Mangal Pandey was tried before a Court-martial which sentenced him to be hanged till death, and on April 8, 1857 he was executed.<sup>74</sup>

This was the first sacrifice to flame the First war of the Indian Independence, which gave courage to the nation to bear arms against an alien ruler and spread the spirit of revolutionary martyrdom all over India.

#### Outbreak at Meerut :

The first real outbreak of the First war of Indian Independence took place at Meerut, an important military station, some 40 miles north-east of Delhi, on Sunday May 10, 1857. The Company's Government did not take any lesson from the Bengal incidents and decided to use the greased cartridges at Meerut to test if the sepoy really objected these cartridges.

On April 23, Col. Carmichael Smyth, commanding the 3rd Native Cavalry at Meerut, ordered a parade to be held next morning,



not of the whole regiment but of ninety skirmishers from different troops. His intention was to demonstrate his troops "the new mode by which they might load their carbines without biting their cartridges".<sup>75</sup> With the exception of five, all the sepoys refused to touch the cartridges.<sup>76</sup> A native Court-martial convened to try the 85 troopers sentenced them to ten years rigorous imprisonment. Though the sentences themselves were harsh, the procedure for promulgating them certainly exceeded the military decorum.<sup>U</sup> A punishment parade of the entire garrison was ordered for Saturday May 9, 1857 by Divisional Commander General Hewitt. Next morning "the whole brigade was assembled to see the culprits disgraced. Stripped of their uniforms, these miserable felons were handed over to the Smiths, who riveted fetters<sup>e</sup> on their arms and legs",<sup>77</sup> and were taken to the civil jail.

The Indian sepoys who had been made to witness the scene took to heart the insult to which their colleagues had been subjected to. They were aggrieved with the tyranny of the Britishers, and it had become impossible for them to wait upto the scheduled day - May 31, 1857. They could not hold their anger for long, held several meetings at night and decided to revolt next day i.e. May 10, 1857. It was Sunday. In the evening Sawars of the 13rd Cavalry proceeded to the old prison and released their comrades who joined the mutineers of the 20th Native Infantry Regiment. The 11th N.I. cooperated reluctantly. The bungalows and offices of Europeans and other buildings connected with the administration were set on fire, isolated British officers and their families attacked and murdered, telegraph wires to Delhi were cut-off and the railway line put under observation. In the night the sepoys advanced to Delhi to capture the city and proclaim Emperor Bahadur Shah as the de-facto ruler of India.



At Meerut there were only two regiments of Indian sepoy and one regiment of "Indian cavalry. Against these, there was one Battalion and a Regiment of Europeans there. The entire artillery was also in their hands. Under these circumstances the nationalist sepoy had no chance of success and it was very easy for the British officers and soldiers, who greatly out-numbered the Indian sepoy, to control the uprising but the British "military authorities were paralysed. No one knew what was best to do, and nothing was accordingly done".<sup>78</sup>

The premature outbreak of revolution at Meerut was unfortunate for them because it served a warning to the authorities to prepare themselves ~~as~~ as best as possible for the onslaught at other stations. It completely disarranged the plan of the nationalist leaders for a simultaneous outbreak, and enabled the British to reconquer one by one several parts of the Country, which had become independent of British authority. If the revolution had not started at Meerut before the scheduled date, the destruction of the British Empire in India was certain. The British would have been quite unprepared on that day for a countrywide rebellion, and would have been annihilated throughout the Country.

Meerut regiments marched to Delhi and reached there on the morning of May 11, 1857. The local garrison joined the Meerut troopers to proclaim the aged nominal ruler Bahadur Shah as the real Emperor of India. Once more the Mughal flag fluttered on the ramparts of the Red fort. After the capture of Delhi, a countrywide conflagration broke out in India, which mainly included the following cities and states :

1. Kanpur in North-Western Province
2. Lucknow in Avadh
3. Bareilly in Rohilkhand
4. Jhansi in Bundelkhand
5. Sahabad in Bihar,
6. Gwalior in Central India.



## LUMINARIES OF THE STRUGGLE

"Occasion, complexes, patriotism, impinging on a grain of inborn character, of such are leaders made".<sup>79</sup> The occasion, which brought Tatyá Tope as a military leader in the lime light of Indian military history was the first <sup>in</sup> was of Indian Independence (1857). Many Indians participated in this national struggle with great devotion to the cause, only a few of them are being mentioned here :

1. Rani of Jhansi (Laxmi Bai) :

Rani was a maratha woman of rank with masculine spirit and great military ability. She took part <sup>in</sup> ~~of~~ actual fighting in the national struggle when British had forced their way into the town of Jhansi. After the capture of the city, she escaped from the fort taking an escort of 300 valaities and 25 Sawars and proceeded towards Kalpi. She fought bravely and dashinglly in several battles at Kalpi and Gwalior. On June 18, 1858, she was mortally wounded by the British troops at Gwalior under the command of Brig. Smith and died shortly afterwards <sup>in a befitting</sup> ~~in~~ a soldier's death.

2. Nana Saheb :

Dhondoo Pant alias Nana Saheb was a leading figure in the First war of Indian Independence. He planned the revolution against the British in his palace at Bithur, and successfully carried it out. He was proclaimed as Peshwa at Bithur in July 1857, but was defeated by Gen. Havelock. He fought bravely against British in battles of Kanpur, Bithur and many more. In December 1857, when he was defeated by Sir Colin Campbell, he ~~went~~ to Rohilkhand and at last made his way to Nepal. A reward of Rs. 50,000/- was announced by the British Government for his arrest, but he was never caught.



3. Babu Kunwar Singh of Bihar :

He was a respected landlord of Jagdishpur in Bihar. As a true Rajput he came to the battle-field and fought a series of rear-guard actions with the British showing a remarkable military genius in their organization. He also fought with the enemy on guerilla pattern and forced the British Commander Milman towards the forests. After having given many smashing defeats to the English in the national revolution of 1857, he died of his wounds in April, 1858.

4. Rana Beni Madhav Singh of Avadh :

Rana constituted a large army of matchlock men and constantly harassed the British troops. Along with his brother Gajraj Singh, he plunged himself into the national struggle and fought the battle of Lucknow Residency. After the loss of Lucknow, he carried on his exploits on the Grand Trunk Road and later resorted to guerilla warfare, and ultimately found his way to Nepal. Here he did not respond to the overtures of Maharaja Jung Bahadur, an ally of the British, to surrender himself. Eventually, he fought the Gorkhas in the Dang valley and died a heroic death along with his brother and many soldiers.

5. Prince Feroz Shah of Mandla<sup>1</sup>sores (Central India) :

Prince Feroz Shah was a patriot of the highest order. Without resources or following he raised a large army and bravely fought with the British. He assisted Maulvi Ahmad Ullah Shah of Faizabad in his attack on Shahjahanpur and subsequently joined Rao Saheb and Tatya Tope. Thereafter he wandered in the Sironj jungles and refused to surrender. After long wanderings, he ultimately found his way to Mecca to die.



6. Begum Hazrat Mahal of Avadh :

Begum was a forceful personality with the qualities of a military leader on the one hand and of a statesman on the other. On recapturing Lucknow, the British made overtures to the Begum to surrender promising a liberal provision for herself and her son, but instead of seeking protection of the British, she preferred the life of a destitute exile in Nepal.

7. Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly :

A retired Judicial officer Khan Bahadur Khan organized a force which in course of time swelled to 30,000 men. In ~~xxx~~ May, 1858 his Rohilla Cavalry made a furious charge on the British forces commanded by Sir Colin Campbell in Bareilly. After some further engagements he found his way to Nepal and surrendered there. In the trial he was sentenced to be hanged till death.

8. Emperor Bahadur Shah II :

Bahadur Shah was <sup>the</sup> last titular emperor of the Mughal dynasty in India. During the first war of Indian ~~Independence~~ Independence, he accepted the leadership of the revolutionaries on May 11, 1857 and became their rallying point. He ~~was~~ successfully restored the law and order in Delhi and prevented Hindu-Muslim conflict there. After the reconquest of Delhi by British, he surrendered to Major Hudson on September 21, 1858. He was tried before a military commission and was sentenced to life imprisonment in Rangoon, where he died in 1862.

9. Maulvi Ahmad Ullah Shah of Faizabad : ~~xxxxx~~ ~~xxxxx~~ ~~xxxxx~~

Maulvi Ahmad Ullah Shah was a patriot with great <sup>b</sup> abilities, undaunted courage, stern determination and was by far the best soldier. He defeated the English force in the battle of Chinhat near Lucknow. Thereafter he was amongst the prominent leaders to <sup>c</sup> fight against the enemy under Begum



- K Hazarat Mahal. After the fall of Lucknow he remained active and fought several actions in Rohilkhand and succeeded in occupying Shahjahanpur. Repulsed from Shahjahanpur, he appeared before Powain, a small fort on the Avadh-Rohilkhand border. The Raja closed the gates of his fort, therefore, he charged the gates with his elephant. In this effort he was shot dead. The Raja got Rs. 50,000/-, the price of the Maulvi's head from the Company.

10. Rao Saheb :

Rao Saheb, in association with Tatya Tope, played a leading role in the First war of Indian Independence and violently shattered the foundations of British rule. After the disaster of Sikar, Rao Saheb along with Firoz Shah had separated from Tatya Tope. British Commanders tried to cordon the Sironj jungle in which they had taken shelter, but they could not lay their hands on Rao Saheb. At Chenani, (Jammu) he was arrested by Deputy Commissioner of Sialkot and was brought to Kanpur for trial. He was found guilty on August 20, 1862, and was hanged at Bithur.

11. Azimulla Khan :

He was a vakil or Diwan of Nana Saheb, and was deputed to go and plead his pension case before the authorities in England. In view of British historians he was the brain behind the uprisings at Kanpur and had a prominent hand in the organisation of the rebellion throughout the Country.

12. Nawab Tafazzul Husain Khan of Farrukhabad :

He took active part in the first war of Indian Independence. A reward of Rs. 10,000/- was proclaimed by the British for his arrest. Later, he was seized by the British and was carried to Aden and thence sent across the frontier from where he made his way to Macca.



13. Azizen :

She played an important part in the uprisings at Kanpur. At the very beginning of the revolt she collected a squad of brave and fearless Indian women flock. The members of this party put on male attire and went riding on horses with sword in hand. Sir George Trevelyan has described :

Azeezun, the Demoiselle Theroigne of the revolt, appeared on the horse back amidst a group of her admirers, dressed in the uniform of her favoured regiment, armed with pistols and decorated with medals.<sup>80</sup>

Her party supplied ammunition to the fighters at the entrenchment regardless of fire from the enemy. They also looked after the wounded sepoys and distributed milk, fruits and <sup>w</sup>sweet-meats amongst them. On the reconquest of Kanpur, she was arrested by General Havelock, who promised to spare her life if only she relent and apologize. But she declined and was ordered to be shot dead.

14. Nawab Ali Bahadur II of Banda :

He took prominent part in the nationalist struggle and after his flight from Banda, he joined the forces of Tatya Tope. Eventually, surrendered on the Queen's proclamation and was granted a pension of Rs. 4,800/- P.A.

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- <sup>6</sup>Majumdar, Raychaudhri and Datta : An Advanced History of India, (1963) p. 638.
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## CHAPTER II

### MAKING OF TATYA

#### BIRTH AND FAMILY

Much is not known of Tatya Tope's earlier life. Some facts about him can be gleaned from his statement he made after his arrest and some of the deposition made by Ram Krishna Tope, Tatya's step-brother, before the Assistant Resident of Baroda in 1862.<sup>1</sup>

Tatya Tope's original name was Ram Chandra Pandurang Rao Yewalekar. Tatya<sup>2</sup> was only an alias, while Tope was a nick name which stuck to him. He was a Deshashtha Brahmen, and his family originally belonged to Yewele, a small place in Patoda district (near Nasik), and hence the surname 'Yewalekar'. Tatya in his statement to Major Meade (April 10, 1859) gave his age to be forty-five years,<sup>3</sup> which gives us 1814 as the year of his birth. It is said that when Tatya Tope's father, Pandurang Rao Bhatt, came to Bithur along with Peshwa Baji Rao in 1819, then Tatya was four years and his younger brother Gangadhar Rao was two years old. This also proves that Tatya Tope was born in the year 1814.

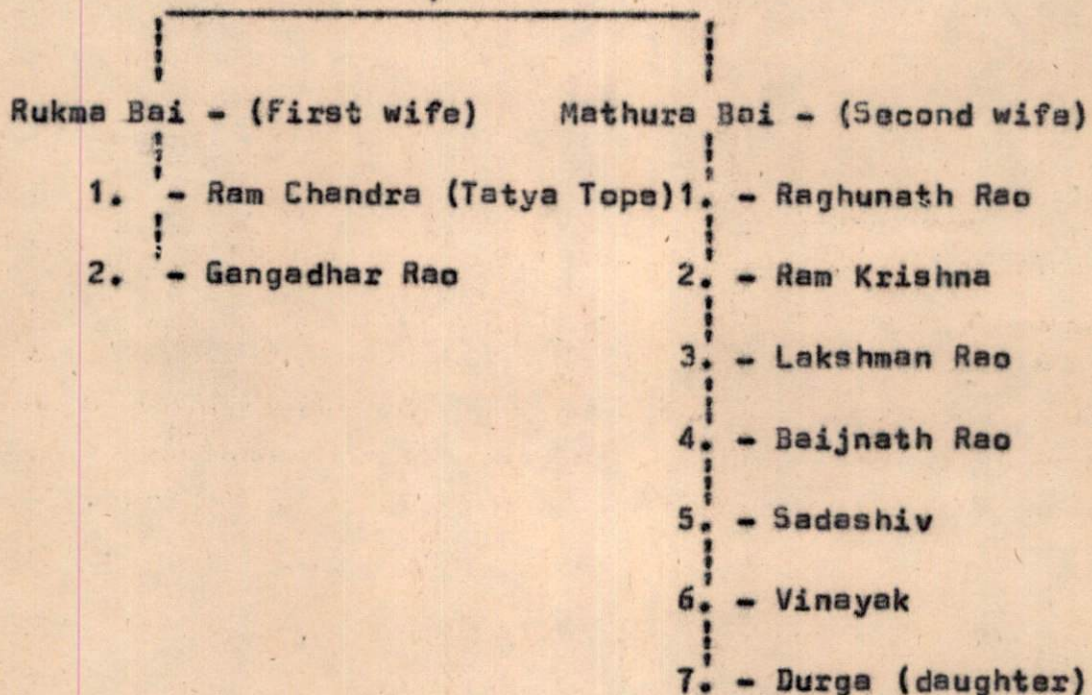
Tatya's father, Pandurang Rao Bhatt,<sup>4</sup> was a learned man, as befitted his caste, and while searching for some gainful employment he shifted to Poona, the then capital of the Peshwas, with the help of Trimbakji Dengale - then an important Courtier. It was also through him that he was introduced to the last Peshwa Baji Rao II, who employed him as a priest in the palace. With his learning, integrity and sound judgement, he earned the position of the supervisor of the Peshwa's Religious Endowment and Household Department.



## 2.2

In the battle of Basein 1818, Peshwa Baji Rao was defeated by the British and lost his empire. He accepted an annual pension of Rs. 8 Lacs and in 1819 he along with his followers and attendants opted to settle at Bithur, a small town on the bank of the Ganges, 14 miles in the North-West of Kanpur. Pandurang Rao, along with his wife Rukma Bai and two sons Ram Chandra (Tatya Tope) and Gangadhar Rao shifted to Bithur along with the deposed Peshwa. After the death of his first wife Rukma Bai, he married ~~with~~ Mathura Bai, who gave birth to six sons and one daughter.

Pandurang Rao Yewalekar's Family



### EDUCATION AND EARLY LIFE

Tatya Tope had no formal military training<sup>5</sup> and military experience. Like an average youth of his day he received martial training along with Peshwa's sons, but this training did not qualify him for the role he was destined to play. It seems that he had "inherited the natural instinct of his



(Maratha) race for guerilla tactics".<sup>6</sup> On this account he could easily elude his British adversaries.

In the Company of Peshwa's three adopted sons - Nana Saheb, Bala Saheb and Baba Bhat, Tatya grew up into an ambitious young man. Moropant Tambe came to Bithur after the death of Chimnaji Appa along with his daughter Manikarnika (Manu);<sup>7</sup> and became a courtier of the deposed Peshwa. The popular story<sup>cs</sup> that Nana Saheb, his brothers, Manikarnika - the future Rani of Jhansi, and Tatya - the prominent leaders of the first war of Indian Independence; in their early days used to play war-games together. They digested patriotic and heroic deeds of the Marathas, which inspired them for the revolt. But some historians have discribed it as an apocryphal,<sup>8</sup> which is against the facts because to regain the lost empire must have been one of the many youthful dreams of Nana and his playmates.

#### BEARING AND PERSONALITY

Tatya Tope was not much to look at, but he seems to have had a distinct personality. He was a well-built young man of medium height. His large and penetrating eyes were set in a dark-coloured face with marks of smallpox.<sup>9</sup> John Lang who saw him at Bithur, was not impressed by his appearance. He described him as :

A man of about the middle height - say five feet eight - rather slightly made, but very erect. He was far from good looking. The forehead was low, the nose rather broad at the nostrils, and his teeth irregular and discoloured. His eyes were expressive and full of cunning, like those of most Asiatics, but he did not strike me as a man of eminent ability.<sup>10</sup>

The 'Bombay Times' correspondent, who met Tatya after his capture, wrote in the issue of April 18, 1859<sup>5</sup>, that Tatya is "neither handsome nor ugly but he is intelligent. His



2.4

demeanour is quite calm and restrained... He is of robust health and of middle height".

The other descriptions tell us that Tatya Topa had finely drawn eye-brows, high cheek bones and a broad jaw indicating a determined and intelligent mind. He had a rich shock of hair and a thick moustache. He had a good knowledge of Marathi, Hindi, Urdu and Gujarati, but in English he knew nothing except to put his signature. He spoke haltingly but distinctly in a measured style but in a telling manner and could carry the audience with him. The fact that he could often win over to his side troops with uncertain loyalty speaks of Tatya's gift of speech and power of persuasion.

#### EARLY CARRIER AND CHARACTER

Bithur offered little scope for Tatya's abilities and ambitions. It is obvious from the fact that for sometime he served under the East India Company in an artillery regiment of the Bengal Army. He could not, however, carry on in a mercenary army for long because of his temperamental independence and organising capacity - qualities which were rather a disqualification for an Indian sepoy in the British troops. Thereafter he tried his luck as a money lender but very soon he discovered that it was totally alien to his temperament, therefore, he gave it up. As his father was already heading the Peshwa's Household Department, he was eventually taken in the household staff of the Maharaja Baji Rao, to whom he was greatly attached.

A story tells us how Tatya came to be called 'Topa'. Impressed by Tatya's ability, astuteness and cleverness in exposing the treacherous designs of one of the employees, Peshwa Beji Rao in a special durbar presented him a costly



2.5

cap (Topi) of rare design,<sup>11</sup> and Tatya was hailed by the audience as "Tatya Topi". Another version is that this surname was given to him because he had for some time served as an artillery-man in the British Top-Khana.

After the death of Peshwa Baji Rao in 1851, Nana Saheb became the Raja of Bithur and Tatya became his Chief scribe. Like-mindedness drew them closer than ever before and very soon he became Nana's Musahib (Advisor), but none could have ever thought that destiny will choose this simple, plain-looking, non-descript clerk to play a major role in the fight for national freedom and that he would earn for himself a place of glory in the Indian military history.

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## CHAPTER III

### MILITARY ADVISER AND PLANNER

#### TATYA'S STATECRAFT AND DIPLOMACY

The First war of Indian Independence (1857) projected Tatya Tope, an ardent patriot having remarkable qualities of statesmanship and diplomat. "Diplomacy is the means of obtaining the maximum national advantage without the use of violence... sometimes it is interspersed with the threat of coercion and it always depends in some degree on the power, whether military, economic or moral or depriving from association with others, of the state for which the diplomat is acting"<sup>1</sup>

After finalizing a well formulated scheme of revolution against the British rule in India, Nana Saheb made an organization for its successful conduct. Baba Bhat, Jwala Prasad and Azimulla Khan were allotted different portfolios in the said organization. Nana Saheb was the head of this organization and Tatya Tope was his advisor and guide.<sup>2</sup> Thus Tatya Tope played a leading role in the execution of the plans of revolution all over the country, particularly in North and Central India, though things were done in the name of Nana Saheb, yet in practice, Tatya was the brain and force behind nationalist plan against the British. Sir William Hunter has rightly remarked that whatever little military talent Nana displayed was due to Tatya Tope.<sup>3</sup>

#### Tatya with Nana on tours :

After planning the future revolution against the British, Nana came out of Bithur with his group under the pretext of pilgrimage<sup>4</sup> to organise the secret mission.<sup>5</sup> Tatya Tope was also with him and they covered many cities including Delhi, Ambala, Meerut, Lucknow, Kalpi etc., and visited the "military



stations all along the main Trunk Road".<sup>6</sup> In Lucknow his movements aroused suspicion from Sir Henry Lawrence, the chief commissioner of Avadh,<sup>7</sup> and he cautioned Sir Hugh Wheeler at Kanpur against Nana that he was not to be depended on. British historians have seen Nana's tours with suspicious eyes :

An English nobleman, in the course of three or four months, might visit all the chief cities of Europe without anyone taking heed of the occurrence. But the nobility of India are little given to travelling, and the Nana Saheb had rarely gone beyond the limits of Bithur. That within so short a time, he should make these three journeys, was a fact to excite speculation.<sup>8</sup>

On returning to Bithur, Nana in consultation with Tatya Tope, finalized and fixed the D-Day of the First war of India's Independence.

#### Advices and plans for the great struggle :

The first blow for the independence was struck at Meerut on May 10, 1857, but till June, 4, native sepoys at Kanpur did not participate actively in the movement.

#### Kanpur's strategic position :

Situated on the southern bank of river Ganges, Kanpur was an important military station<sup>9</sup> having large quantities of guns, ammunition and other military stores. After the annexation of Avadh, it was considered necessary to maintain a strong garrison at Kanpur, as it commanded the Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Calcutta, and also the ~~ky~~ highway which led to the bridge to Lucknow. In view of its strategic position, it <sup>was</sup> strongly garrisoned with 1st, 53rd and 56th Native Infantry, 2nd Regiment of Light Cavalry and <sup>a</sup> Company of artillery, the native force totalling about 3,000, together with 61 European artillery men with 6 guns.<sup>10</sup> Later, on May 22, 1857, a force ~~x~~



of 55 Europeans and 140 Sowars arrived from Lucknow. East India Company's forces at Kanpur were under the command of Maj. Gen. Sir Hugh Wheeler, who had a fifty year's record of meritorious service.

#### Turning events :

As the tension mounted in mid-May 1857, Hillersdon, the Magistrate, sought Nana's help in restoring confidence amongst native sepoys and the residents of Kanpur.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly Nana along with Tatya Topa arrived at Kanpur on May 22, 1857, with a force of 300 men and two guns.<sup>12</sup> He was appointed to guard the treasury<sup>13</sup> in Nawabganj. Thus fate unexpectedly provided him an opportunity to carryout his plan. Tatya knew that the key to success lay in winning over the troops to his side, because India had a tide of nationalism, which only needed the support of men-in-arms to execute the people's feeling of independence. Therefore, Nana devoted himself to winover the men of 2nd Light Cavalry<sup>14</sup> and succeeded in turning them to the nationalist side. This precedence was followed by other regiments too.

#### Wheeler's entrenchment :

Appreciating the outbreak of revolution in Kanpur City, wheeler ordered all the European residents to move into the entrenchment, which was constructed hastily to provide protection to the Europeans against any sudden attack by the native revolutionaries. It consisted of two single-storied barracks, one of which had only a thatched roof. Around these barracks a trench was dug, but it was not deep enough and the mud parapet was weak and hardly four feet high. The witty Azimulla Khan named it as "The Fort of Despair".<sup>15</sup> On June 4, 1857, provisions for a month were stored in the barracks and one lac of rupees were brought from the treasury into the entrenchment.



Nana takes the lead :

On the night of June 4, 1857,<sup>16</sup> 2nd Light Cavalry took lead in the nationalist struggle, they left their lines for Nawabganj where lay the treasury and the magazine. They were followed by 1st Native Infantry and later on by the 56th also. Nana made a common cause with the sepoy and distributed cash amongst them. Then the sepoy released the prisoners from jail, raided the magazine and captured ammunition. Thereafter, to practicalize the slogan 'Delhi Chalo', they marched towards Delhi, making the first stage of their halt at Kalyanpur<sup>17</sup> on June 5, 1857.

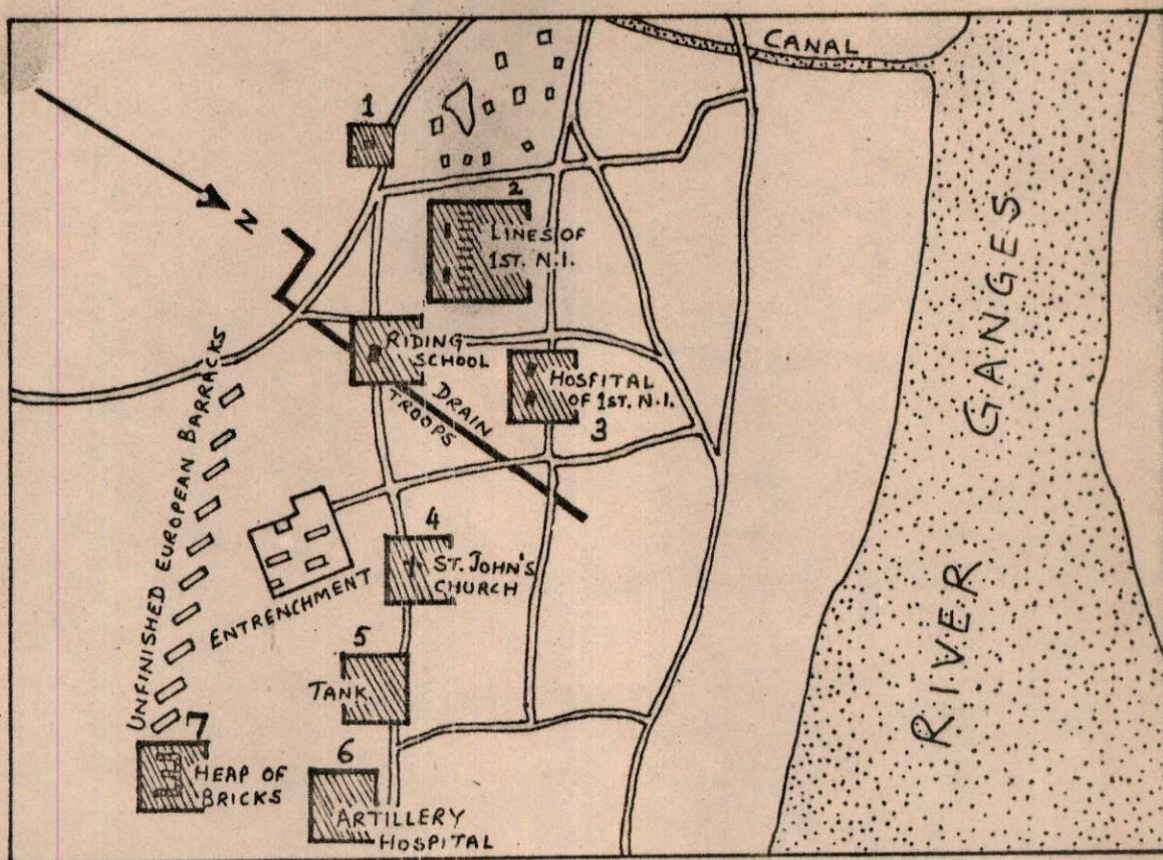
Nana Saheb and his astute advisors realized that to concentrate all the forces at Delhi would be a bad strategy since it would enable the British forces to march unopposed for the attack on Delhi. Seizure of Kanpur, on the other hand, would cut-off the vital line of communication from Calcutta to Delhi. Therefore, Nana persuaded the troops to return back to Kanpur and assumed their leadership.<sup>18</sup> At this moment Nana had two major objectives:

1. To infuse vigour into the administration for restoring law and order, for which he took energetic steps.
2. To reduce the entrenched European garrison to submission, which was entrusted to Taty<sup>ya</sup> Tope, the Nana's military advisor. This was the first opportunity for Taty<sup>ya</sup> Tope to project himself that he has the making of a great military leader.

Taty<sup>ya</sup> Tope's skilful planning :


With the help of some of the experienced officers of the Bengal Army, Taty<sup>ya</sup> Tope planned an attack on the European garrison. Subedar Tika Singh (now promoted as Chief of the 2nd Light Cavalry with the title of General), Subedars Dugunjan Singh and Gangadin (now promoted as Col<sup>o</sup>nels of 53rd Native Infantry and 56<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry respectively), Jwala Prasad the commander





# DEPLOYMENT OF TATYA TOPE'S TROOPS

JUNE 26, 1857.

DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS ..... 

BATTERY 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.



of Nana's own troops, all these had long military service to their credit. Tatya Tope also secured the support of Nunney Nawab alias Mohammad Ali Khan, who was placed as commander of the artillery. He also had a detachment of gunners and drivers from Avadh Artillery to operate the guns. Tatya's ranks further swelled when the armed retainers of many local zamindars rallied in his support. Soon after, another ~~contingent~~ contingent of Avadh soldiers of Nadiri and Akhtari Regiments, under the command of Mir Nawab, joined them. Now Tatya Tope not only had a large and efficient army with experienced officers to lead it, but he had also a vast magazine at his disposal along with a treasury to pay to the soldiers.

Tatya Tope lost no time in launching an attack on the entrenched European garrison. The guns were brought from the magazine and the attack began at <sup>1000 hours,</sup> ~~10 A.M.~~ on June 6, <sup>19</sup>. An iron ring of outposts, strongly garrisoned by infantry, was drawn around the entrenchment. Every building, Nala (drain) and other places for posting the infantry were fully utilized. The Riding School, St. John's Church, the Officers' bungalows and a tank with high embankments provided good shelter to the infantry. About 250 yards ~~away~~ away from the entrenchment there was a strong position consisting of a heap of bricks, which was held by Tatya Tope's troops. There were some unfinished European barracks which provided a suitable base for the infantry to launch attacks on the entrenchment. Thus <sup>a</sup> tactically Tatya's infantry was well deployed.

Tatya Tope exhibited considerable skill in deploying his batteries. The entrenchment was surrounded on all sides by the guns and mortars so as to pour effective fire on the European garrison. The first battery (one 24-pounder gun) was positioned near the lines of the 1st Native Infantry, the second (two 24-<sup>b</sup> pounder guns) in the lines of 1st Native Infantry, the third (two 24-pounder howitzers) in the hospital area of the 1st Native Infantry, the fourth (two mortars) behind



St. John's Church, the fifth (two 24-pounder and one 18-pounder guns) near the tank, the sixth (two 18-pounder guns) in the Artillery Hospital, and the seventh (one 9-pounder gun) on the heap of bricks near the unfinished European barracks.<sup>20</sup>

The British garrison :

The British garrison had about 800 persons, out of which about 400 were women and children. There were 200 soldiers to protect the Europeans against the revolutionaries. The northern side of the entrenchment was defended by a frail earthwork, called the Redan. At the south-east corner there was a battery (one 24-pounder howitzer and two 9-pounder guns). One battery (three 9-pounder guns) was located in the north-eastern side of the entrenchment, while another (three 9-pounder guns) was in the north-west corner, flanked by a rifled 3-pounder gun. These batteries were supported by infantry. There was a picket of British soldiers in one of the unfinished European barracks.

Tatya Tope's vigorous attacks and British surrender :

Tatya Tope pushed-on the siege with vigour from June 6 to June 25, 1857. He adopted the strategy of ~~xxxxxx~~ incessant shelling to silence the enemy guns, coupled with occasional attacks by the infantry and the cavalry. The heavy shelling played havoc in the enemy camp, and by the end of the first ~~xx~~ week, all the 59 British gunners were either killed or wounded and 6 guns were knocked out. Day by day Britan's position worsened because majority of their guns were destroyed and stocks of ammunition and provisions depleted. Britishers made frantic appeals for reinforcements from Lucknow, but, due to compelling circumstances, British forces stationed at Lucknow could not come forward to help their brethren at Kanpur.<sup>21</sup> The communications with Calcutte were completely cut-off. Therefore, the beleaguered British did not hope to last long and the defeat stared them in the face.



On June 25, 1857, General Wheeler raised the white flag,<sup>22</sup> whereupon Nana Sahab at once passed orders to stop 'fire' and sent a message through Mrs. Greenway.<sup>23</sup>

All those who are in no way connected with the acts of Lord Dalhousie and are willing to lay down their arms, shall receive a safe passage to Allahabad.<sup>24</sup>

Next day an armistice was signed by which Wheeler agreed to surrender the garrison, the guns and the treasure, while each man was permitted to carry his arms and 60 rounds of ammunition. In return, Nana promised to provide the necessary conveyance, - boats with way-long ration, to them.<sup>25</sup>

Nana asked Tatya Tope to make arrangements for despatching the garrison to Allahabad. In the morning of June 27, 1857, he provided transport facilities to enable the garrison to reach Sati Chaura Ghat - the place of embarkation. A huge crowd had assembled at the Ghat to witness their former rulers depart. Here 40 boats were kept ready. On a carpet spread on the platform of 'Har Deva's' temple, sat Bala Rao, Azimulla Khan, Jwala Prasad and Tatya Tope to supervise the departure. As the Englishmen, women and children were entering the boats, somebody sounded a bugle to signal the pandemonium. The troops and the ambushed guns on the ghat went into action, and the thatched roofs of the boats caught fire. Many were burnt to death, while others were killed by musket fire. The rest, mostly women and children numbering about 200 were taken as prisoners. A single boat escaped which was seized later but, before it could be captured, four of its occupants had fled for their lives.

Regarding Tatya Tope's role in the massacre at the ghat, it has been said by some eye-witnesses that the killing started at a signal from Tatya who was sitting on the terrace of the temple watching the event. The fact is that, Tatya, who had made arrangements of the boats, had done his duty well. He told Maj. Meade in his deposition that he "got ready forty boats and having caused all the gentlemen, ladies and children to get



into the boats, I started them off to Allahabad... The sepoys jumped into the water and commenced a massacre".<sup>26</sup> The signal which Taty Tope gave for starting the boats might have been mistaken by the Britishers to be a signal for their massacre. In the absence of any proof, this can only be concluded with what Sir George Campbell says in his 'Memoirs' :

We must remember ~~xxx~~ two things : first, it was not done in cold blood, but in the moment of rage and despair when Havelock had beaten the rebels and was coming in, and second, we had done much to provoke such things... At a later time a careful investigation was made... and we failed to discover any premeditation or direction in that matter. Neill did things worse than the massacre.<sup>27</sup>

#### Revival of the Maratha Empire :

With the last trace of British authority having been wiped out from the city, Taty's dream of revival of the Maratha Empire seemed to have come true. On July 1, 1857,<sup>28</sup> Nana Sahab was proclaimed as the 'Peshwa' at Bithur. Taty, wary and astute, did not entertain any false hopes about the newly revived Maratha Empire. He <sup>e</sup>knew that soon the British troops would be on them with renewed vigour to regain their supremacy. He therefore, wasted no time and set himself to the task of consolidating his forces.

#### FORMULATING ENCOUNTERS

Col. Neill took over the command of Company's troops at Allahabad to suppress the revolt in the north-east. Having 'pacified' Allahabad, he was ready to move to help the garrison at Kanpur - which, not known to Neill, had kneeled down before the revolutionary forces. On June 30, 1857, Col. Neill's advance guard under Maj. Renaud of Madras Fusiliers with a detachment of 400 British soldiers, 300 Sikh<sup>s</sup> of Ferozepur Sikh Regiment, 120 Native troopers of the irregular Cavalry and two 9-pounders, were to move by road, while another detachment consisting of 100 Fusiliers and one gun were to move up-river in a steamer.



Col. Neill had intended to follow with his main body on July 4, but on June 30, as Renaud marched out, a senior officer ~~Major~~ Henry Havelock arrived and took over the command of his troops. On July 2, 1857, he got the information that Wheeler and his men had surrendered at Kanpur on June 27. As Renaud had started only with a small force, Havelock sent him an order to slow down his advance and keep a vigil on his rear, front and flanks, and wait for the arrival of the reinforcements.

BATTLE OF FATEHPUR : (July 12, 1857)

While Tatya Tope was busy in organizing his defences, Havelock was preparing to advance for the recapture of Kanpur and to relieve the British garrison at Lucknow. When Nana was informed about the British plans to recapture Kanpur, he asked Tatya Tope to plan his strategy to counter the enemy's move. Tatya Tope sent a large force, containing 3000 infantry, 500 Cavalry and 12 guns<sup>29</sup> under the command of Jwala Prasad, towards Fatehpur. Along with this force were Tika Singh, Beba Bhat and Liyakat Ali. On July 10, 1857, the British advance guard arrived at the outskirts of Fatehpur (about 10 miles from Fatehpur), where they received Havelock's order. Renaud was impatient and wanted to capture Fatehpur to win laurels for himself. A large force of Tatya's men under Jwala Prasad was kept waiting there to annihilate the advance guard. But Renaud escaped the trap which Tatya had laid for him. Had he made an attempt to achieve his desired goal, not a man would have lived to tell the tale.

In the morning of July 12, Havelock's forces joined Renaud.<sup>30</sup> It consisted of about 1000 men of the four British battalions.<sup>31</sup> The force was supported by a six gun battery, consisting of two 6-pounders, two 9-pounders and two 12-pounder howitzers, commanded by Capt. Maude of the Royal Artillery. Havelock's force pushed on and encamped in an open plain at a distance of four miles from Fatehpur.



Topography :

Fatehpur was well defended. Hard and dry Grand Trunk Road was the only approach and plains on either side of the road were full of two to four feet deep water. The town was surrounded by garden enclosures with high walls. Outside the town, in front of the swamps, were hillocks, villages and mango-groves, which provided good cover to the infantry.

Havelock's deployment :

Before advancing towards the town, Havelock sent a cavalry patrol to reconnoitre, and when it was near the town, Jwala Prasad ordered his horsemen to rush upon it. The British patrol galloped back to their camp, pursued by Tatya's cavalry. Havelock immediately deployed his troops in battle array. In the centre 8 guns were deployed on the road under Capt. Maude, R.A.<sup>32</sup> which were protected by 100 Enfield riflemen of the 64th Regiment. The infantry was put behind at a short distance with its flanks protected by the volunteer and irregular cavalry. Having his forces deployed in the aforesaid manner, Havelock ordered the attack to be launched.

Conduct of the battle :

Jwala Prasad was under the impression that he was dealing only with a small detachment under Renaud, therefore, when he came in contact with a large well-organized British force, he was surprised. The British guns, supported by infantry and protected by skirmishers and cavalry on the flanks, pushed forward and opened fire at 880 yards on Jwala Prasad's troops. This created a confusion in his troops, however, he rallied behind the second battery, placed on the road in the rear, and made a bold stand. The infantry rallied and tried to re-form while the cavalry advanced down the road to check the British advance. But all was in vain.



"The rifle fire, reaching them at an ~~xxx~~ unexpected distance, filled them with dismay, and when Capt. Maude was enabled to push his guns through flanking swamps, to point blank range, his surprisingly accurate fire demolished their little remaining confidence."<sup>33</sup> They fell back on their ~~strong~~<sup>er</sup> defensive positions in the town of Fatehpur, and the British forces moved forward to capture these positions. On the right, the attack was led by the Madras Fusiliers, and Maj. Renaud captured a hillock held by Jwala Prasad's troops and moved forward to clear the remaining positions. On their left the 78th Highland~~ers~~<sup>er</sup>, in extended order, waded through mud and water, keeping up the communication with the centre. The 64th Foot supported the centre and left. The 84th Foot and the Sikh Regiment of Ferozepur made a thrust on the left. Jwala Prasad's infantry offered strong resistance, but this availed nothing, and one by one their guns were captured by the British along with ammunition and baggage. After fierce fighting they were driven in succession "from the garden enclosures, from a strong barricade on the road, from the town wall, into and through, out of and beyond the town".<sup>34</sup> Even then they did not ~~Ab~~<sup>a</sup>jectly give up the struggle. They made a final stand a mile beyond the town of Fatehpur on the Kanpur side before retiring to Aung and with the help of 2nd cavalry tried to renew the ~~xxx~~ combat by charging Native Irregular Horse of the British. Though Jwala Prasad's forces fought ferociously, but the enemy fire scattered them away. The town, along with eleven guns, fell in British hands.

Havelock could not carry on a pursuit as the Native Irregular cavalry had refused to fight, and was next day disarmed.<sup>35</sup>

#### Casualties :

Casualties were very light. Twelve British soldiers were struck down and Tatya Tope lost some ammunition, baggage and eleven guns.<sup>36</sup>



Deductions :

Battle of Fatehpur was Havelock's first victory, and the first reverse for Tatya's troops which had a negative effect on their morale. Jwala Prasad's defeat and rout was the result of faulty information about the enemy's strength and the faulty tactics followed by him. By giving<sup>g</sup> the battle in the open plain, instead of taking up a strong defensive position which the town of Fatehpur afforded, he committed a tactical<sup>a</sup> mistake. Though Jwala Prasad had never seen battle before, and was no match to experienced Havelock, who had fought in many actions and was adept in tactical warfare, it must be said to his credit that ~~xxx~~ except for the initial setback, he displayed remarkable skill in offering strong opposition and extricating his force.

BATTLE OF AUNG AND PANDU NADI : (July 15, 1857)

After the battle of Fatehpur Jwala Prasad retarded and took-up position in Aung. Fresh troops and guns had arrived from Kanpur to reinforce him. Aung was a strongly defended position, with an entrenchment and guarded by two 9-pounder guns.<sup>37</sup> On both<sup>e</sup> the flanks, the village had walled gardens, thickly studded with trees, which afforded good shelter to the infantry. Thus Tatya Tope's troops awaited the British attack at this strongly defended position.

Havelock's forces resumed their advance in the early hours of July 15, 1857, and reached Aung at the phase of the sun,<sup>n</sup> which they found under the control of Tatya's troops.

Havelock's deployment :

Havelock's one-third force moved as an advance guard<sup>38</sup> which consisted of the Volunteer cavalry, a detachment of the 64th Regiment and six guns of Maude's battery, to launch an attack on the entrenched position under the command of



Col. Tytler. Havelock himself commanded the remainder of the rear force to protect the baggage, which was threatened by Tatya Tope's Cavalry hovering on both the flanks.<sup>39</sup>

Conduct of the battle :

As the advance guard approached the entrenchment, Tatya Tope's two guns opened fire and some of his troops, in perfect skirmishing order, moved to a new position which was about 200 yards in front of their main position.<sup>40</sup> This was a bold move which indicates that Tatya Tope's troops were prone to take initiative, to strike the enemy. Now there was a long fierce fight - the Madras Fusiliers were attacked not only by the skirmishers but were also subjected to fire delivered by Tatya's matchlock men from the thickly wooded country. In this hotly contested engagement Maj. Renaud of the Madras Fusiliers was mortally wounded,<sup>41</sup> While this engagement was going on in front of the entrenchment, Tatya Tope's cavalry was hovering on the enemy's flanks and made repeated attempts, to ~~xxxk~~ attack the rear column commanded by Havelock, to capture the baggage train. But their efforts were overthrown by Havelock's fire. Col. Tytler now moved forward,<sup>42</sup> under artillery cover, and pushed back Tatya's troops from the forward position. The sepoys fought bravely but could not stand for a long. The heavy fire of the British guns and Enfield rifles forced them to <sup>a</sup>fall back behind the entrenchment. The cavalry, seeing the infantry routed, immediately withdrew, leaving their baggage and military stores.<sup>43</sup>

Tatya Tope's troops were, however, in no mood to give up their strong position but after a determined and gallant stand, they had to vacate their entrenched position at the point of enemy's bayonet. They withdrew to a next strong position down the road, near the bridge over Pandu Nandi. Havelock could not pursue them due to his inadequate cavalry arm.<sup>44</sup>



The bridge - a strategic landmark :

Pandu Nandi was swollen by rains and had become practically impassable. The only way to Kanpur lay over the fine masonry bridge. Tatya Tope was fully alive to the strategic importance of the bridge and devoted considerable time and attention to its defence, and made a two fold plan :

1. To defend the bridge as long as possible, for which he deployed a strong force under the command of Bala Rao with two 24-pounder guns to sweep the bridge and Grand Trunk Road.
2. To blow it up<sup>45</sup> and retard the advance of British force as a last resort, if entrenched position on the opposite bank becomes untenable.

Havelock was quite alive to the strategic importance of the bridge. He had no pontoons and it was impossible for him to get the boats in the hostile area. The destruction of the bridge would have retarded his advance to Kanpur. Therefore, though his troops were tired after the day long battle at Aung, he gave them no rest. He ordered the force to advance to the bridge and they reached it in two hours.

Havelock plans an attack :

When the British force approached the bridge, Tatya Tope's troops under the command of Bala Rao opened fire. Havelock made a plan of attack which was immediately executed. Maude's battery was directed to envelop the bridge in an enfilade fire, while the Madras Fusiliers - armed with the deadly Enfield rifles, were ordered to push on through the ravines, take up positions on the bank above and below the bridge. The plan was successfully executed. Three guns moved forward and were sited in front of the bridge - two on the right and one on the left.<sup>46</sup>



Conduct of the battle :

As it was rainy season, the ground on both sides of the road was heavy and uneven. It was a good opportunity for the native gunners to knock out the British guns when they, unsupported by infantry, advanced to engage the heavy guns of Bala Rao. But although the native gunners were quite skilful in operating the guns, they have not learnt the trick of halting enemy's advancing troops.<sup>47</sup> The round shot from the native guns did not do much damage, and the British forces soon came into action at 600 yards range. The artillery duel lasted for sometime, but two of the native guns were disabled at a critical moment. With the result, Bala Rao found it impossible to hold an untenable position for long and ordered to blow up the bridge, before he retreated to a defensive position previously prepared. But the explosion, which was aimed at the bridge was unsuccessful, only the parapet walls were destroyed, the arch remaining steady.<sup>48</sup>

Havelock crossed the bridge, captured the guns and occupied the opposite bank of the river. The next morning, they resumed their march ~~for~~<sup>to</sup>wards Kanpur.

Casualties :

Two Europeans (a Highlander and a bombardier) were killed and 25 wounded. Maj. Renand<sup>u</sup> wounded mortally. Among revolutionists, only a few sepoys<sup>y</sup> wounded and their troops escaped safely leaving 2 guns.<sup>49</sup>

Deductions :

The failure of the attempt to blow up the bridge proved fatal for the defending forces. It enabled Havelock not only to seize Kanpur, but also to make attempts to relieve Lucknow Residency. If the bridge had been blown up immediately after the retreat from Aung, the British advance would have been



considerably retarded. It was, indeed, a grave tactical blunder but so far as Taty's operational plan is concerned, there was nothing wrong in it, except that he had an overwhelming faith on the skill of his sappers and miners to blow up the bridge.

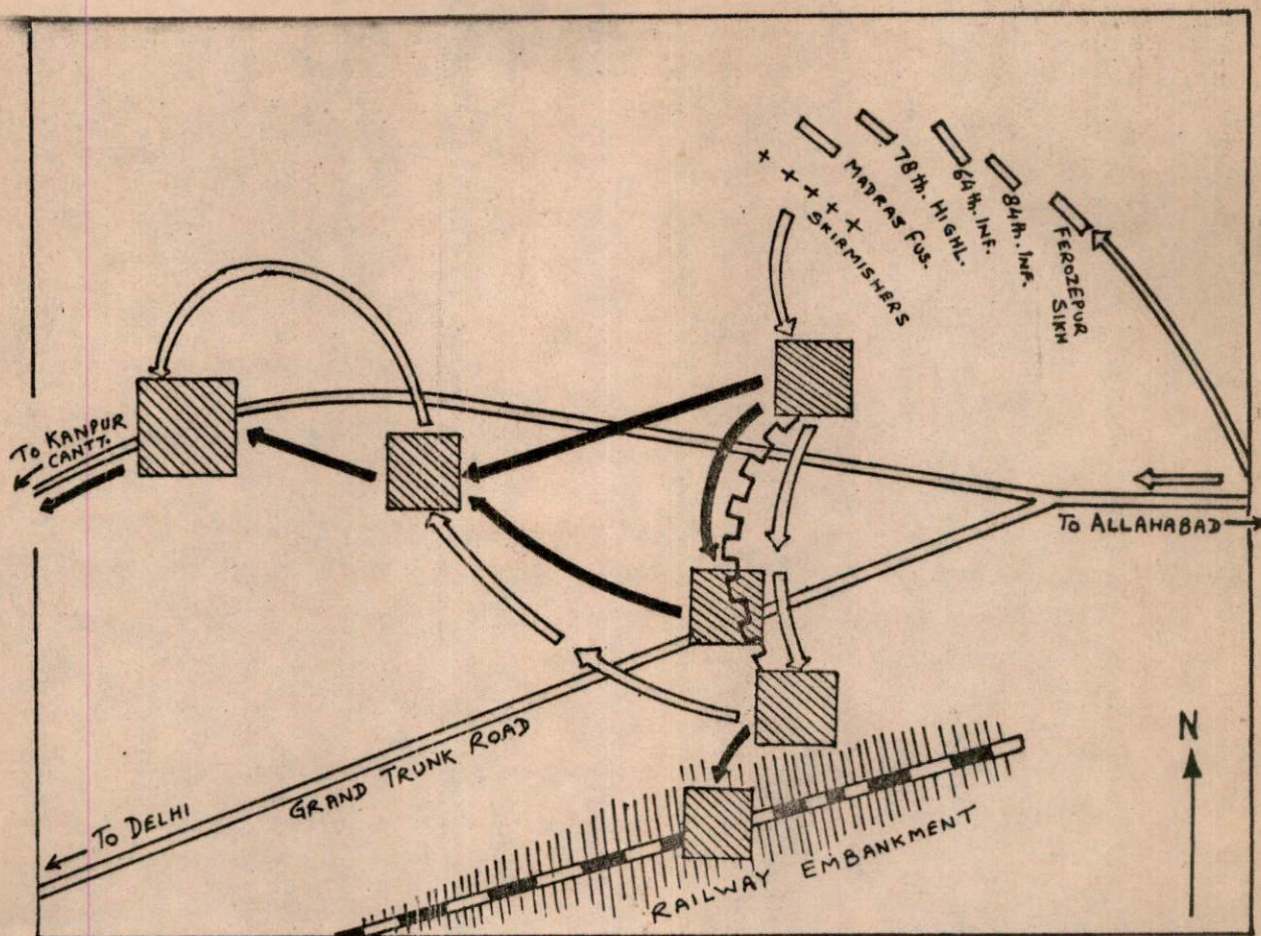
BATTLE OF KANPUR (AHIRWAN) : (July 16, 1857)

The third consecutive victory at Pandu Nandi boosted Havelock's morale and he advanced for the fourth and final battle of Kanpur (Ahirwan) to decide once for all whether the newly revived Maratha Empire would survive or not. Taty Tope decided to intercept the British forces on Grand Trunk Road at Ahirwan near Kanpur cantonment. A strong force containing 5000 infantry and cavalry along with 8 guns,<sup>50</sup> under the command of Nana Saheb advanced to take defensive position there.

Taty Tope's deployment :


Great skill was shown by Taty Tope in selecting the defensive position and deployment of troops. The troops were posted about a mile behind the ~~fork~~ fork created by the junction of two roads, - the Grand Trunk Road leading to Delhi and the way to Kanpur - cantonment, and were arranged in the form of an arc bisecting the two roads.<sup>51</sup> Both the roads were cut across by entrenchments so as to make them impassable. His left flank was defended by four 24-pounder guns and it was protected by the river Ganges at a mile distant, with the high ground that sloped towards it. The central position was entrenched and was supported by a 24-pounder howitzer and a 6-pounder. Kanpur-cantonment road ran between his left flank and the centre. The right flank was defended by two 9-pounders and it was protected by a walled village with a grove of mango trees providing excellent shelter. Still further to the right was the railway embankment, which offered a suitable place for defence. Grand Trunk Road ran between his right flank and the centre. The

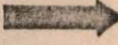


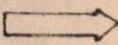


## BATTLE OF KANPUR (AHIRWAN)

JULY 16, 1857.

DEPLOYMENT OF TATYA'S TROOPS ..... 

RETREAT OF TATYA'S TROOPS ..... 

ATTACK BY BRITISH TROOPS ..... 



infantry was massed in support of the guns to defend this strong position, while the cavalry was in the rear.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, Tatya Tope displayed high military talent in selecting the strong defensive position and in the disposition of ~~xxxxxx~~ troops. His troops "were disposed of in a manner which taxed all the power of the British commander who had been studying the art of war all his life. To Havelock's column advancing along the great high road from Allahabad... the sepoy forces presented a formidable front".<sup>53</sup>

Havelock's appreciation of the situation and plan of <sup>a</sup>Attack :

As the sun <sup>s</sup>phared out on July 16, 1857, Havelock's troops resumed their march and after covering a distance of 16 miles they halted <sup>t</sup>at the village of Maharajpur, six miles from Kanpur. Here they obtained information regarding Tatya's dispositions for planning their attack. Havelock realized that a frontal attack on Tatya Tope's extremely strong position would be disastrous, and an attack on the right flank too was <sup>a</sup>costly affair. There was no other alternative than to attempt a left flank attack on Tatya's forces. This course of action provided an advantage that a thick row of mango groves in front of Tatya Tope's left flank, would provide a cover for his troops. Havelock resolved to launch the attack on Tatya Tope's left and to leave his field hospital, baggage and camp-followers behind in an enclosure at Maharajpur with a strong guard and two guns.<sup>54</sup> The British general took two grave risks by deviating from sound principles of war:

1. The first risk was that the abandoned baggage train in the rear, should things go wrong, would have been cut off.
2. The second risk was even more serious. The left flank attack meant his back towards the river, which, if things had gone wrong, might have forced Havelock's troops to select their graves in the deep water of river Ganges.



Havelock ordered his troops to advance three miles along the road, then the main column was to move off to the right under the cover of dense mango groves towards Tatya Tope's left, while the volunteer cavalry was to move by the road, to cover the flanking movement and mislead Tatya's troops that a frontal attack was imminent.

#### Conduct of the battle :

The battle of Kenpur was fought at three different positions in a day. Tatya Tope's appreciation of the situation was that Havelock's force would advance via the Grand Trunk Road to the point of the fork, from where ~~and~~ one way lead to Kenpur-cantonment. Accordingly, he deployed his troops and fixed his guns, so that their fire could be concentrated on the fork. But the British general outwitted him.

#### First phase :

British forces resumed their march at 1330 hours on July 16, 1857, covered a distance of three miles along the road and then the main attacking column moved off to the right<sup>55</sup> under the cover of a line of dense mango groves, while the volunteer cavalry continued to advance along the road.

Tatya's troops mistook the volunteer cavalry as enemy's advance guard and opened the fire at it. But the main fighting force had moved under cover of the mango grove. The Madras Fusiliers marched at the head of the column. Next came the 78th Highlanders and the central battery, under Capt. Maude, followed by the 64th and 84th infantry regiments supported by 2 guns. Ferozepur Sikh regiment functioned as rear-guard of the force. This main column marched unperceived for about 1000 yards and then the open ground between the trees revealed their movement to Tatya Tope's troops. Tatya Tope pushed forward a large body of cavalry to the threatened left flank and ordered the artillery to open fire on the



advancing British column. The artillery fire, however, failed to check the British advance because artillery at the centre and the right could not fire for fear of hitting their own troops. Four 24-pounders on the ~~left~~ left were causing heavy casualties on British column especially the 64th Foot and 78th Highlanders, but the British column succeeded in completely turning itself at the left flank to attack Tatya's left position. The 78th Highlanders, covered by the Madras Fusiliers in skirmishing order, led the attack. The British guns opened fire to engage Tatya Tope's heavy guns, which were well entrenched behind a lofty hamlet. When the British guns failed to silence<sup>ce</sup> the heavy guns, General Havelock ordered the 78th Highlanders to make a bayonet charge in order to capture the entrenched position along with guns. With their bayonets fixed, the Highlanders<sup>s</sup> crept forward and as they came within few hundred yards of the guns, Tatya's heavy fire forced them to lie down. After a short pause, they rose up and rushed in a body upon the battery. There was a long and grim dog-fight between the two forces. At last, unfortunately, Tatya Tope's left flank was crushed and the infantry, unable to save the guns, withdrew hastily at its two other positions<sup>56</sup> to strengthen them against the pending attack by Havelock's troops.

Thus, Tatya Tope's left had died and he was forced to direct all his efforts to prevent the centre and the right flank from being annihilated by the enemy. The first target of the British forces was Tatya's central position with a heavy howitzer. After a short pause, the 78th Highlanders, supported by the 64th, charged through the village to capture the howitzer. Ensuing a desperate struggle Tatya Tope's troops lost the field and fell back to another position in the rear without the howitzer. Meanwhile 18 men of the Volunteer cavalry advanced on the Kanpur-cantonment route to kill the minor stragglers, but they had to retire when they met with strong opposition. In this process they lost one-third of



3.20

their force.<sup>57</sup> The 64th and 84th followed by Sikhs came forward to attack Tatya Tope's right. A brief but fierce struggle broke-out, in which, Tatya lost 2 guns and withdrew to match the enemy from his rear strong positions, behind the railway embankment.

Though Tatya Tope's troops were driven from their strong defensive position, they did not withdraw in confusion, but steadily fell back to strengthen their rear positions, which provided them facilities to protect the Kanpur road and their right flank respectively.

Second phase :

At this stage the British troops were very much tired. Their bullocks, fully exhausted with dragging the guns through swamps, fell in the rear. The volunteer cavalry was assigned the task of protecting the guns. Thus the British infantry was left without any artillery or cavalry support. This was the time for Tatya to seize initiative in launching counter-attacks on the enemy's centre and both the flanks at a time. On the right flank, two companies of the Madras Fusiliers were attacked by a swarm of Tatya's cavalry. This attack was repelled. On the left flank, the 64th regiment alongwith Capt. Maude of Royal Artillery had taken up position in the trees, where Tatya Tope's troops had made their stand. They were subjected to heavy musketry fire from the Railway embankment by Tatya's men, but Capt. Maude ~~xx~~ turned the captured guns upon Tatya Tope's infantry and forced them to disperse. Thus, Tatya's attacks did not succeed on any of the flanks. Meanwhile, Tatya's troops opened heavy fire on the centre of the British position, entrenched in the wooded village. The 78th Highlanders and the 64th regiment advanced to ~~xxx~~ attack the wooded village, and after a desperate resistance, Tatya's troops pulled out of the village and took up another position in the remote rear.



Third phase :

Though Tatya Tope was perplexed but not paralysed, therefore, he made one more determined effort to check the British advance. He took up a position on the road leading to Kanpur-cantonment. His troops were considerably reinforced by fresh troops and 3 guns - a heavy 24-pounder, flanked by two others of small calibre.<sup>58</sup> Tatya Tope and Nana Saheb decided to employ all their reserves in a bid to save Kanpur, because this battle was a turning point of their destiny.

Circumstances were most favourable for the annihilation of the British ~~force~~ force. The British camp, protected by Maude's guns, was threatened by Tatya Tope's cavalry, who tried to envelop it from two sides. Simultaneously, the rear of the British camp was subjected to heavy musketry fire by the infantry positioned on the railway embankment. Therefore, Maude was not only required to repel the cavalry attacks but also to silence <sup>ce</sup> a couple of guns positioned at the railway embankment. After about half an hour, two light guns and a 24-pounder opened up fire on the approaching British columns. It was, indeed, a very critical situation for the British force, because they were "actually facing towards all four fronts of the compass at the same time, all the while being utterly without support!"<sup>59</sup> Their infantry columns were unsupported by the guns, while the latter, being about a mile in the rear, were unsupported by infantry. The British troops exposed to the fire of the guns and the musketry, lay down on the ground partly to rest and partly to escape the fire of Indian guns. Maude made great efforts to push his artillery forward but the bullocks were so much exhausted that they could not drag the guns and the "great tidal wave of British conquest seemed for a moment to be receding".<sup>60</sup> This pause in the advance of the British columns was the <sup>me</sup> first opportunity for launching an attack and capturing the British guns which, unsupported by the infantry, were advancing to help Havelock's forces. But, unfortunately,



at this critical juncture Taty's troops, particularly the cavalry failed to attack the British guns. Capt. Maude truly remarks - "If the cavalry, who were close to us had possessed one atom of dash, they could have taken the whole of our eight guns at that moment without losing a dozen men".<sup>61</sup>

General Havelock, perceiving that the battle would be lost, did not wait for the arrival of his guns. The next moment he sent "his son to the spot" where the troops "were lying down under such cover as they could get with an order to rise and charge".<sup>62</sup> The British infantry, led by the 64th regiment under command of young (Major) Havelock rushed forward to capture 24-pounder battery. Taty's gunners sent round shot into the British ranks and when the British line came within a range of 300 yards, they poured in grape with great precision and determination.<sup>63</sup> But the 64th, in spite of heavy casualties, steadily pushed on to the muzzle of the 24-pounder and eventually captured it, after a spirited charge. Taty's troops retired after a hurried fire of musketry. Maude's battery came forward and with heavy cannonade on the retreating sepoys it completed the victory in favour of the British.

#### Deductions :

The battle of Kanpur was lost but General Havelock was denied the fruits of victory. Utterly exhausted by continuous march, followed by battle after battle, the British troops were not in a position to pursue the beaten troops, and therefore, bivouacked that night without food or tents. It was already dark when the battle was finally decided and under the cover of night Taty's troops made good their escape. Thus, though Taty Tope lost Kanpur, he was successful in extricating a very large part of his force, which within a month rallied round him again.



The primary cause of defeat of Tatya's troops was the absence of a great nationalist leader who could have coordinated the activities of various forces engaged in fighting isolated battles. The strategic importance of Kanpur was greater than that of Lucknow, because it could act as a firm base for the operations to be undertaken against revolutionaries at Lucknow and other places in the North-west Provinces. Therefore, every effort should have been made to prevent the British force from securing this important base of operations. Sound strategy dictated that only a small part of the Nationalist force should have carried on the siege of Lucknow Residency, and the rest should have been sent here. With sufficient reinforcements Tatya Tope would have, probably, succeeded in foiling British advance, and the Battle of Kanpur would have had a different ending.

After the capitulation of the British garrison on June 26, 1857, Tatya Tope got hardly a fortnight to plant and organize his forces for the defence of Kanpur. He admirably engaged the better trained and more disciplined British troops in a series of actions, skilfully planned the defence of Kanpur, but if his cavalry had shown more vigour and courage, he would have probably succeeded in annihilating the British forces.

#### Impact on future military operations :

The defeat of Tatya Tope's troops at the Battle of Kanpur changed the course of the nationalist struggle. They lost an important link with Lucknow, which was another nerve-centre of the revolution in Avadh. It destroyed the nucleus of a potential power and afforded a strategic base for the military operations in Lucknow, Avadh and the North-west Province by the British forces. Thus loss of Kanpur weakened the nationalists to a great extent.



## SQUEEZING GWALIOR

Tatya Tope was never disheartened even if his forces were shattered and his fighting material exhausted. He had the power of persuasion<sup>s</sup> and capacity to win over and build up a strong force. Though Tatya was defeated at the Battle of Bithur<sup>64</sup> (August 16, 1857) but he never lost the sight of his prime object - to recapture Kanpur with a view to disrupt the enemy's line of communication. He could achieve his objective, only if he could get reinforcements to build up a strong force. Tatya thought that effective reinforcements could be obtained from Gwalior, and his hopes were not belied. Tatya reached Gwalior and made use of all his energies to infuse in the sepoys a sense of national dedication.

In Gwalior, the Maharaja Sindhia had a personal troops worth 10,000 majority of them being Marathas, along with Gwalior contingent<sup>65</sup> having more than 5,000 men paid by the Maharaja, but drilled and commanded by British officers. The bulk of the force was stationed at Gwalior with outposts at Sipri and Agra.

In fact Gwalior forces had revolted as early as June 1857 along with Jhansi, but Maharaja kept them appeased by various devices, mainly by liberal allowances and fair promises of active support for the nationalist cause after rainy season therefore, when their brethren~~x~~ at Indore and Mhow marched against Agra, they did not join them. They also did not come to Kanpur's rescue when Havelock captured it. If they had joined Nana, the revolution would have gained momentum and had altogether changed the course of freedom struggle. It was Tatya Tope, the astute, sweet tongued man who could weave a spell round his audience, and he succeeded in influencing the Gwalior contingent. They left Gwalior on November 4, 1857,<sup>66</sup> reached Kalpi and placed themselves under Tatya's command<sup>67</sup> on November 9, 1857.



## BESIEGING CHARKHARI

After his defeat in Battle of Kanpur<sup>68</sup> (December 6, 1857) against Sir Colin Campbell Tatya Tope extricated his force with great skill and ingenuity. He was not dispirited. He marched to Kalpi and reached Charkhari, the capital of a small Bundela state, about 95 miles from Jhansi; whose Raja was loyal to British. It was a great strategic move on Tatya's part. His strategy aimed to confuse and mislead the enemy with a view that if the enemy attempts to attack Jhansi, his rear would be threatened by Tatya.

Tatya Tope began the siege of Charkhari with a small force of 900 sepoys and 4 guns,<sup>69</sup> later he was reinforced by 5 or 6 regiments of the Gwalior contingent. The besieged Raja of Charkhari did not wish to side with Tatya Tope, therefore, he tried to gain time by stratagem. He had full faith that British strength would succour him, and for this he sent an urgent appeal to the Governor-General Lord Canning, who in consultation with Commander-in-chief Sir Colin Campbell, ordered Sir Hugh Rose to divert his force to assist the Raja of Charkhari,<sup>70</sup> who was being besieged by Tatya Tope. Sir Hugh Rose now faced with a dilemma, - should he first go to the rescue of Raja of Charkhari (80 miles away) or move against Jhansi (just 14 miles) - as originally planned? He thought, that the fort of Charkhari would fall even before he could reach there, therefore, he stuck to his original plan and moved on to Jhansi.<sup>71</sup> Tatya Tope defeated Charkhari's forces after a grim struggle which continued for eleven days. He tried to persuade Juhar Singh's troops to join him for the national cause. Juhar Singh and his men agreed to it, as a result Tatya's forces got entry into the town. Thus, on March 1, 1858, the town of Charkhari was captured by Tatya<sup>72</sup> and the fort was besieged. Later, many sepoys came to the side of Tatya. This success brought him 24 guns and 3 Lacs of rupees from Raja.



At Charkhari, Taty's plan and conduct of battle was remarkable which is evident from the letter written by Mr. J.H. Carne, Assistant Magistrate of Charkhari to the Governor General :

The enemy conducted all their operations very systematically... They could afford their relief parties; while some fought, others rested; as one set was observed going away, another was seen coming to take their places, even during the continuance of the conflict. They had their bugle calls during the last grand assault, and each separate band of matchlock men was, led on and performed its assigned task...<sup>73</sup>

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## CHAPTER IV

### ADMINISTRATOR, LOGISTICIAN AND TACTICIAN

Chapter III of this treatise projected Tatya Tope as a capable military advisor<sup>e</sup> and planner, who formulated the politico-military strategy of the first war of India's Independence. In this chapter an effort is being made to project Tatya Tope as a capable military leader - ~~administrator~~ administrator, logistician and tactician. Before projecting Tatya's merits as a military leader, an effort is being made to define basic terms also.

### MILITARY ORGANIZATION

The word military organization is generally associated with the authority of the state to regulate a human force, proficient in the use of weapons, for the good of the nation. This concept of the military organization belongs to the Clausewitz's theory of war, who writes, "War is nothing else but a continuation of state policy by different means".<sup>1</sup> Since Clausewitz's concept of war has undergone a drastic change, the concept of military organization too has followed the precedence. Now "the term war is generally applied to armed conflict between population groups conceived of as organic unities such as races or tribes, states or lesser geographic units, religious or political parties, economic classes. Armed conflict between states, that legally enjoy complete and unlimited sovereignty is in modern thought treated as typically war".<sup>2</sup>

Encyclopaedia Britannica contains that "war in the popular sense is a conflict among political groups involving hostilities of considerable duration and magnitude... Military



writers usually confine the term to hostilities in which the contending groups are sufficiently equal in power to render the outcome uncertain for a time".<sup>3</sup>

In view of the above, military organization can be termed as an organization of men-in-arms dedicated to achieve or preserve a purpose or mission of a group of people through the profession of armies or war equipments against the rival. The group of people governing the activities of the men-in-arms under its control may be the state, a political party or a socio-economic organization of the people devoted to achieve a changed socio-political order against its own or a foreign government.

#### Tatya's military organization :

Tatya Tope possessed the remarkable organizational power which he displayed right from the first battle of Kanpur, when he built-up Peshwa's army which earned him laurels. His organizational capacity was not confined to the battles he fought against the British, but also in establishing factories and workshops for the manufacture of provisions of war. He established several factories in Kalpi for manufacturing gun-barrels, gun-powder, shells and bullets,<sup>4</sup> to achieve his objective. The entire fort was converted into an ordnance factory and the bullets manufactured by them were flawless. The systematic way in which the war-provisions were stored indicated that Tatya was preparing for a long-drawn war against the British.

Tatya's troops faced the enemy with vigour and firm determination, because of their organization of highest order, otherwise he would have failed to wage a prolonged war against a resourceful and organized British force under the command of war-veterans. On July 15, 1857, Tatya selected a position in Aung which was strongly defended with an



entrenchment in the front and its both the flanks were protected by walled gardens, thickly studded with trees offering good cover to his troops.<sup>5</sup> During the battle of Bithur (August 16, 1857) Tatya's troops, concealed in dense plantations of sugarcane and castor-oil, fired so heavily on the Havelock's troops that they failed to silence nationalist guns and he remarked that "they (Tatya Top's troops) fought obstinately, otherwise they could not for a whole hour have held their own, even with much advantages of ground, against my powerful Artillery fire".<sup>6</sup>

During the siege of Charkhari Tatya's well organized troops waged a systematic war against the enemy. His systematic conduct of operations<sup>7</sup> *to establish that Tatya possessed remarkable* was remarkable power to carry men with him and use them as an united mass. When Gwalior was seized on June 1, 1858, Tatya Top was "declared as Dewan, and he commenced nominating Thanaders and Tahseelders to organize a Government as speedily as possible".<sup>8</sup> He also started reorganizing and re-inforcing his troops. Landholders ~~XXXXXX~~ (Jagirdars) were ordered "to enroll 25 men from each village to join the rebel army"<sup>9</sup> to oppose the British, and trained military officers were deputed to provide military training to the young recruits.

In the marathon race, which lasted for more than 9 months, Tatya surpassed all his adversaries and established his reputation as one of the great guerilla leaders of the world. His skill in extricating his forces from annihilation and rout, after they had been beaten, and the capacity of ~~regathering~~ regathering considerable portion of his ~~scattered~~ scattered forces redounds of his remarkable power of organization.

#### MILITARY ESPIONAGE

Information concerning an actual or possible enemy, is



essential and valuable for military planning. The complete process by which military intelligence is produced includes the collection of raw information, evaluation of its pertinence, creditability and accuracy, and its analysis to determine its probable significance in the light of intelligence already available.

Espionage may be defined as :- (i) any attempt to obtain secret information about an actual or potential enemy which might be used against the same or any other enemy and (ii) any secret or concealed action performed within an area controlled by an actual or potential enemy for the purpose of weakening or destroying his defences.<sup>10</sup>

Counterespionage includes all measures utilized to thwart the espionage activities of the adversary.

The principal subdivisions of military espionage are combat espionage, strategic espionage and counter espionage.<sup>11</sup>

1. Combat espionage :

It is a wartime product and its purpose is to determine how and to what extent the enemy, the terrain and the weather will affect the operations of troops in the field. It forms the basis for the combat orders of military commanders.

2. Strategic espionage :

It is concerned with the capabilities, vulnerabilities and probable courses of action of foreign powers. It is used by those high-level military and civil authorities who are assigned with the task of planning and execution of major national security measures in peace and with the conduct of large-scale military operations during war.

3. Counter espionage :

It covers all security control measures designed for



protection against espionage, sabotage or subversion by foreign powers or discontented domestic groups.

Tatya's military espionage :

Tatya Topa had organized his intelligence branch with great expertise. He had spread a complete network of spies all over the northern India. His spies lived even in British Cantonments,<sup>12</sup> and used to inform him regarding enemy's strength, position, weapons, equipments and movements. The timely information regarding Sir Colin Campbell's departure to Lucknow, enabled Tatya to plan an advance towards Kanpur with a view to cut-off the enemy's base of operations. As a result, on November 10, 1857, that is the day following the Commander-in-Chief's departure to Lucknow, Tatya Topa crossed Yamuna to recapture Kanpur.<sup>13</sup>

During his guerilla activities Tatya # used to cross the rivers - Ganges or Yamuna, and suddenly launch an attack on the basis of intelligence collected by his spies. He knew when and where to attack and the technique to slip-away on arrival of British troops with a view to avoid confrontation with them. In the third quarter of August 1858, Brig. Parke, who was in pursuit of Tatya could not confirm which way Tatya had gone alongwith his force. He got contradictory informations from the local inhabitants and was misguided that Tatya would not be able to cross the swollen Chambal. Whereas, on the basis of prompt and dependable information, Tatya successfully crossed Chambal and escaped from the net, which Brig. Parke had laid for him. An officer who took part in the pursuit of Tatya Topa wrote that Tatya's troops "had the very best information and never trusted themselves to the open country when any force was near. We had the very worst information even in the territories of professedly friendly Rajas. The sympathy of the people was on their side".<sup>14</sup> This establishes that Tatya was well ~~served~~ served with a network of spies in comparison to his British adversaries.



## BATTLECRAFT AND BATTLE ARRAYS

The art of employing troops by taking maximum advantage of geo-physical conditions with a view to administer surprise on the enemy may be termed as battlecraft. This process is facilitated by the use of various formations co-relating the geophysical conditions, which is <sup>n</sup>military terminology is known as battle-arrays. An army without its proficiency in battlecraft and use of battle-arrays will not succeed even if it is numerically very superior to the enemy, hence it may be said that battlecraft is the foundation of flavouring the battle with the element of surprise and effecting on the enemy undue nervousness, so that he is forced to give up the battle without fighting it, to his capacity. Hinderson has rightly said, "War is not merely a blind struggle between mobs of individuals, without guidance or coherence, but a conflict of well-organized masses, moving with a view to intelligent cooperation, acting under the impulses of a single will, and directed against a definite objective".<sup>15</sup>

The practical application of the art concerning battle craft aims at the following :

1. Observe without being observed and see without being seen.
2. Close up with the enemy without being identified and located by him.
3. Conceal your strength and position from being exposed to the advancing enemy with a view to surprise him with the strength of your numbers and deployment.
4. Always preserve unidentified reserve to meet the uncertainty which is always certain in war.

### Battle arrays (Vyuhās) :

Drawing up of an organized force for combat in a battle order according to the plan of the battle, keeping in view the



nature of ground is called Battle-array or Vyuha.<sup>16</sup> In modern military terminology the battle arrays are being substituted with the term tactical formations and deceptive strategic manoeuvring and movements. Ancient Indian ~~literature~~, literature, particularly the sanskrit literature, provides enough material to explain that ancient Indians had made use of a number of battle-arrays as a part of their sound strategy against the opponent. The ancient Indian battle-arrays, as mentioned in Manusmriti, Shukraniti, Arthashastra, Agnipuran, Mahabharat, Ramayan etc. have been coordinated to state that ancient Indians had made use of 16 types of battle arrays<sup>17</sup>, namely Danda Vyuha, Bhog Vyuha, Mandel Vyuha, Asanhat Vyuha, Makar Vyuha, Suchi Vyuha, Shakat Vyuha, *Vajra Vyuha*, Chakra Vyuha, Cronch Vyuha, Sena Vyuha, Sarvatobhadra Vyuha, Vyal Vyuha, Barah Vyuha, Garud Vyuha, and Padma Vyuha.

The theories and principles of modern strategic manoeuvre and tactical as well as strategical movements seems to have been derived from and based on the ancient Indian theory of battle arrays, because modern strategic and tactical deployment of troops resembles with the theory of deployment of troops under various battle arrays, which were in use in ancient India, as mentioned above. Modern strategic and tactical movements are based on the following principles :

1. The theory of interior and exterior lines.
2. The theory of Hammer and Anvil.
3. Envelopment and double envelopment.
4. Penetration and turning movement.
5. Refusing a flank and forming front to a flank.
6. The theory of fire and movement.
7. Application of Blitzkrieg and web defence, and above all.
8. Application of the theory of the strategy of indirect approach, based on the principle of "mystify, mislead and surprise the enemy".



During his campaigns in North, Bundelkhand and Central India, Tatya Tope made use of different types of battle-arrays (Vyuhas) to surprise and damage the enemy forces, for example :

1. In the Battle of Ahirwan which took place on July 16, 1857, Tatya Tope posted his troops about a mile behind the fork created by the junction of two roads - the Grand Trunk Road and the way to Kanpur Cantonment, and were arranged in the form of an arc bisecting the two roads,<sup>18</sup> presenting a formidable front for the Britishers.
2. In the Battle of Bithur (August 16, 1857), Tatya adopted ~~for~~ a strong defence by deploying his troops under the cover of sugarcane and castor-oil plantations, flanked by walled quadrangles.<sup>19</sup>
3. On November 10, 1857, Tatya Tope crossed the river Yamuna and advanced with a view to recapture Kanpur. Instead of opting for a shorter route via Sachendi, he advanced towards Kanpur via Bhognipur, Akbarpur, Sheoli and Sheorajpur to mislead Windham that he intended to reinforce the nationalist force at Lucknow, rather than to attack the weak garrison at Kanpur. Tatya's ~~this~~ indirect approach created a sharp difference of opinion amongst the British officers at Kanpur regarding his real intentions. He intended to seize Kanpur, before Sir Colin Campbell's return from Lucknow, and cut-off the British base of operations.
4. On November 27, 1857, Tatya Tope deployed his troops in a semi-circle and made a double thrust into the British position,<sup>20</sup> and forced them to retreat back into their entrenchment.

In the subsequent battle of Kanpur which took place on December 6, 1857, he deployed his troops in two separate



masses, each having its own line of retreat, which served his main purpose of extricating his force intact, after suffering a repulse.

5. In the Battle of Betwa (April 1, 1858), Tatya deployed his troops on two parameters in front of the British force, and by keeping-up pressure on the centre of the British line, despatched a part of his force to envelop the British left flank.<sup>21</sup>

Nearly in all the battles which Tatya fought against the enemy, he formed his battle arrays with great expertise, foresightedness, which were in accordance with the modern concept<sup>of</sup> military tactics. The British commanders were very much surprised to have seen these battle-arrays formed by Tatya. Kaye has highly appreciated the battle array, which Tatya adopted in the Battle of Ahirwan. He writes that ~~Kay~~ Tatya's troops "were disposed of in a manner which taxed all the power of the British commander who had been studying the art of war all his life".<sup>22</sup>

#### ADMINISTRATION OF SUPPLIES - PRODUCTION, PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF LOGISTICS

The term logistics is applied to a wide range of non-combatant activities, especially <sup>t</sup>those connected with supply, transportation, construction and the care and evacuation of sick and wounded.

Jomini divided the art of war into five branches - strategy, grand tactics, logistics, engineering and minor tactics. He defined logistics as "the practical manner of moving armies", by this he meant not merely the mechanics of transportation, but the staff work, administrative arrangements and even reconnaissance and intelligence involved in moving and



sustaining organized military forces. Jomini thought of logistics as a science which virtually encompasses all the activities undertaken by the forces apart from the combat and its planning which involves "the execution of ~~x~~ the plans of strategy and tactics".<sup>23</sup>

The aim of logistics is to meet the material needs of a force in a manner calculated to achieve maximum fighting efficiency in the battle-field with maximum mobility. Mobility is an important ingredient of fighting power, but in practice the two are often opposed. Logistics, therefore, seeks the optimum balance between them. Therefore, logistics is practically synonymous with "military administration", that is, all activities not directly involved in strategy and tactics.

Logistics consists of four principal elements:<sup>24</sup>

1. Supply : food, forage, fuel, ammunition and equipment.
2. Transportation : enabling fighting forces to reach their destination.
3. Services : repairs and maintenance of weapons and equipments.
4. Administration : functions of organizing and <sup>co</sup>ordinating various phases concerning with the handling of military material (including production and procurement), as well as the military personnel (including training) and operation of military facilities.

Tatya Tope had the qualities of a real general. He understood the importance of logistics. Before his defeat at Jora Alipur on June 21, 1858, by Sir Hugh Rose, he took part in many pitched battles against the Britishers. To



fulfil the needs of his fighting troops, he established ~~an~~ several workshops for the manufacture of arms, ammunition and equipments. When Tatya consolidated at Kalpi, he organized the factories and workshops for production of war material on such a large scale, that the fort of Kalpi was turned into an ordnance factory. The British authors, in their book 'Central India', have described the skill and enthusiasm with which war material was being produced - the blacksmith and carpenters were working in the fort, public houses and tents. The bullets and fire-arms manufactured by them were flawless. The way in which the bullets were stored in sequence according to their size, indicated that revolution~~ists~~<sup>25</sup> were preparing themselves for a long-drawn war.

The supplies for Tatya's fighting forces came not only from the workshops he founded, but from other quarters also. He successfully squeezed Gwalior and besieged Charkhari, which provided him not only the reinforcements, but an immense quantities of arms, ammunition, equipments and treasure too.

When Tatya resorted to guerilla ~~xx~~ activities, which dictated not to fight pitched battles but to opt for hit and run tactics, he procured the needed provisions, arms and equipments through levy on the Indian states, and by cutting the enemy's tails. His success in maintaining the uninterrupted line of logistics is evident from the following impression recorded by an officer who took part in Tatya's pursuit :

The swift-footed rebel chief (Tatya Tope), who carried no tents, no provisions; these he looted as he wanted them for consumption, and when his horses were worn out, left them on road to die, and replaced them after the same manner, sometimes from our post stations, and sometimes by attacking our longlines of baggage... The sympathy of the people was on their side; they appeared to have no difficulty in obtaining supplies, while our columns were sometimes much straitened for grain.<sup>26</sup>



## TACTICAL DOCTRINE AND ITS APPLICATION

It is said that primary and ultimate aim of an organization is to shape the working of the concerned organization, similarly tactical doctrine is shaped in accordance with the object, which the struggle aims to achieve corresponding to one's resources in relation to the power of the opponent. In a word tactical doctrine means the methodology of employing the troops under one's command to gain maximum of advantage with minimum of resources and in minimum of time.

The above explanation of the tactical doctrine dictates that the merits and demerits of the tactical doctrine applied by a force in a particular period for a particular task can not be evaluated unless one knows the task and the circumstances under which a particular military force had to function. There are very few scholarly historians who had brought to light some points of resemblance between the American civil war and India's first war of independence. There are few more scholars and thinkers who find similarity between India's first war of independence and the proletarian Russian revolution which paved the way for establishing ~~xxxxxx~~ communistic pattern of society and the state in U.S.S.R., in place of czarism and feudalism. To be precise, points of resemblance between India's first war of independence on the one hand and the American civil war and the Russian revolution on the other, are as follows :

1. All the three struggles were directed against the powerful opponent.
2. In all the three struggles the recognized weaker party represented the will of the people and their determination to do away the oppression.
3. Alike the two struggles i.e. American civil war and Russian revolution, the third struggle, i.e. the India's



first war of independence could have succeeded, if the nationalist had remained united and if a few of them had not betrayed ~~to~~<sup>the</sup> loyal nationalists.

4. In all the three struggles struggler's determination <sup>m</sup>compensated for the lack of military resources against the powerful opponents.
5. All the three strugglers enjoyed the patronage of the people in their respective lands.

In view of the above citations it may be ~~arg~~ argued that the forces which waged first war of India's independence in military terms were no match to their adversaries, hence, they had to base their tactical doctrine on the following points :

1. The nationalists exploited the political discontent against East India Company's policy towards the native people and the rulers, and for this purpose they scored a point by winning over Bahadur Shah to lead them against the alien as a symbol of India's political unity.
2. The nationalists exploited the religious feelings of the native rulers and of the thrown out Indian sepoys who had served under various states which lapsed to the British East India Company on one pretext or the other.
3. The military strategy of the revolutionists was mainly based on harassing the enemy with a view to demoralize him and for this purpose they opted for Guerilla warfare, which encompasses the following strategem :
  - (a) Hit and run tactics, for which he earned the title of guerilla leader - content to fire at the enemy and then runaway.<sup>27</sup>
  - (b) To cut enemy's tails, i.e. to take away enemy's baggage or hinder his supplies.



- (c) To encourage desertion from the enemy ranks for the national cause. Tatya's success in masterminding the brilliant coup in Gwalior is the best example. On June 1, 1858, most of the Sindhia's troops came over to Tatya's side.
- (d) To win over native rulers or their troops to weaken the enemy position and to force them to remain on his heels, to move from one place to another. Tatya's siege of Charkhari provided him reinforcements, huge arsenal, treasury and above all a strong strategic base for operations.
- (e) Nationalists had planned to take the enemy by surprise in a wide area at a time but for the folly of Mangal Pandey. Had the first war of India's Independence begun on the D-Day, Britishers would have been eradicated from this land in a matter of days.
- (f) Nationalists had planned to accomplish the dictum that war is a matter of supply and for this purpose, they had made adequate arrangements.
- (g) The success of the nationalists was based on their practical adherence that war is a matter of movement, carried out by the troops in coherence under the impulses of a single will and directed against a definite objective.
- (h) The nationalists as per dictates of the tactical doctrine based their operations on the principle of effecting surprise on the enemy and for this purpose they developed reliable and speedy means of inter-communication and a sound network of spies.



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## CHAPTER V

### STRATEGIC<sup>ST</sup> AND GENERAL

On being defeated in the Battle of Kanpur<sup>1</sup> (July 16, 1857), Nana Saheb alongwith Tatya Tope (his military adviser), their families and troops, under the cover of dark night on July 18, 1857, evacuated Bithur to proceed to Fatehpur Chaurasi in Avadh. Nana Saheb was highly impressed with Tatya Tope's <sup>ce</sup>advice<sup>s</sup>, planning and deployment of troops in the battlefield. He had full faith in the valour of his sepoys and thought that the failure of his military leader had caused him defeat in the battles, therefore, he appointed Tatya Tope as General of his army.

Subsequent events bear it out that Nana's choice of Tatya Tope as a General was fully justified. While the nationalist struggle in Delhi lasted for four months (till September, 1857), Lucknow fought for ten months (till March, 1858), Bihar fought for seventeen months (till October, 1858), but Tatya Tope continued his struggle till April, 1859.

### STRATAGEM AND GENERALSHIP

The arena of revolutionary war - particularly a war against a powerful alien for the liberation of the nation, is subjected to the quality of its managers more than the quality of leadership effecting the outcome of a long-drawn war in the battle-field. This quality of managing the revolt in political terminology associated with military adventurism is termed as stratagem, while leading the troops against the enemy to harass and defeat him is termed as the art of generalship.



The history of revolutionary wars, particularly for achieving patriotic national goals all over the world reveals that there are very few examples before 1857, wherein one leader had to discharge dual responsibility of a soldier and a statesman. Therefore, Tatya Tope is one of the very few leaders in the world, who spearheaded the first war of India's Independence, though from behind the screen, as a soldier politician; whose power of personality was a terror to his enemy. A well known American Psychologist ~~Max~~ Norman Copeland writes : "The primary duty of a leader is to arouse enthusiasm in (a) The individual members of the group, and (2) The group as a team",<sup>2</sup> because Hinderson has rightly said "Weapons change but human nature - which is the paramount consideration of all questions of either tactics or strategy - remains unaltered". An evaluation of Tatya's merits as a ranked leader of the first war of India's Independence proves that he was a source of inspiration to his men.

Tatya Tope embodied the practical dictum of the art of leadership, that is, the art of influencing a body of people by persuasion, for example to follow a line of action and he went all-out to make them willing to follow him, and thus, he was successful to obtain their willing obedience, confidence, respect and loyal cooperation in order to accomplish his mission - India's liberation and nothing else till he breathed his last.

#### CAMPAIGN IN NORTH

Shortly after the departure of General Havelock from Kanpur on July 25, 1857, most of ~~the~~ the nationalist troops at Kanpur escaped to Avadh to help the siege of Lucknow Residency. It was apparent that Havelock ~~would~~ would concentrate to relieve the Residency. Tatya's plan, therefore, was to collect a large



force at Bithur and to strike at Kanpur again, while Havelock was engaged at Lucknow. It was an admirable plan which indicates that Tatya Tope was a great strategist.

#### BATTLE OF BITHUR : (August 16, 1857)

Within a month, Tatya Tope was able to build up a strong force of 4000 men<sup>3</sup> consisting of the sepoy of the three Bengal Infantry Regiments - the 17th, the 42nd and the 31st. The Cavalry consisted of troopers of the 2nd Light cavalry and the 3rd Irregulars. In addition, he had some troops of Nana's army. With this force and two guns, Tatya Tope took possession of Bithur and planned to threaten Kanpur.

Meanwhile, Havelock received an urgent call for help from Neill alongwith an alarming report about the situation at Kanpur. Havelock returned to Kanpur on August 13, 1857, and saw that, by now, Tatya's troops had come quite near to Kanpur. Therefore, on August 15, 1857, Havelock ordered Neill to face them. This engagement forced Tatya to withdraw his troops to Bithur.<sup>4</sup>

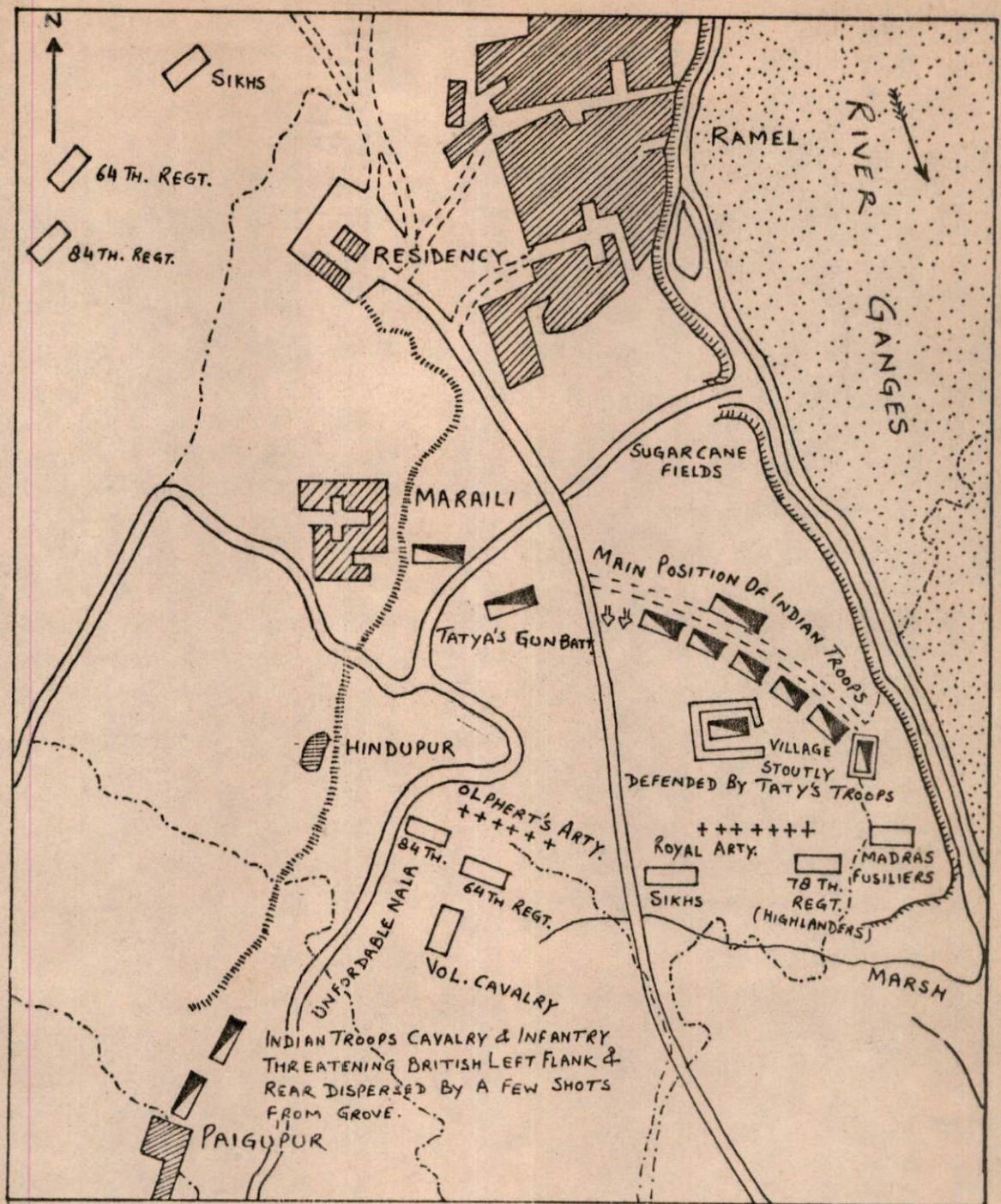
#### Havelock's strength :

On August 16, leaving<sup>v</sup> Neill with only 100 men at Kanpur,<sup>5</sup> Havelock with a force of about 1000 men consisting of 750 Europeans, 250 Sikhs and 14 guns advanced to Bithur and after a weary march of <sup>e</sup>eight hours they reached Bithur.

#### Tatya's ~~disfance~~ defences :


Tatya Tope exhibited considerable skill in selecting a suitable defensive position. He was strongly entrenched behind thick ramparts, flanked by walled quadrangles. One on either flank there were two villages, connected by earthworks. These







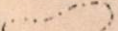
## BATTLE OF BITHUR

AUGUST 16, 1857.

DEPLOYMENT OF TATYA'S TROOPS ..... 

DEPLOYMENT OF BRITISH TROOPS ..... 

METALLED ROADS ..... 

LIMIT OF CULTIVATION ..... 



villages as well as the town of Bithur in the rear, supported the main position. Infront of this strong position was a plain covered with dense plantations of sugarcane and castor oil with habitation in small hamlets.<sup>6</sup> These plantations afforded excellent cover to the infantry. An unfordable swollen ~~xx~~ stream flowed infront of the town, which could only be crossed by a narrow stone-bridge. This bridge was well defended by a breastwork on its flank. Thus Tatya's defensive position was very strong.

#### Conduct of the battle :

Tatya Tope despatched a detachment of cavalry to reconnoitre the advancing columns of the enemy. When this detachment hovered on the left flank of the British column, they were subjected to enemy's fire. Tatya's two guns atonce returned the fire. Havelock decided to advance from the right. The 78th Highlanders, the Madras Fusiliers and Maude's battery formed the right wing, while the 64th, ~~the~~ 84th, the Sikhs and Olphert's battery formed the left wing.<sup>7</sup> The fusiliers were moving in extended order on the extreme right. When they were subjected to a heavy fire from a village concealed by plantations, the British commander atonce deputed two more companies to the right. Thus strengthened Fusiliers engaged themselves in a hand to hand fight with Tatya Tope's troops. After a hard struggle, Tatya's troops fell back.

Now there was an artillery duel between the 2 small guns of Tatya Tope and 14 British guns including the 24-pounders. Tatya's guns were so well served that the British gunners were unable to dislodge them inspite of their superior strength of batteries. Therefore, the British guns, drawn by bullocks, moved forward within 40 yards of the entrenchment, but failed to silence the well concealed guns. On the other hand Tatya's infantry, sheltered behind the breastwork, sent forth a tempest of bullets which swept through the British ranks. This fire



was very severe, General Havelock remarks that he had seen nothing to equal it since the day of Ferozeshah,<sup>8</sup> when the Sikhs had offered stout resistance in the First Sikh War.

Havelock now realizing that nothing could be gained by returning fire, ordered the guns to be captured by storming the breastwork. The 78th Highlanders and the Madras Fusiliers moved off to the right under the cover of sugarcane plantations, and after a bitter struggle British troops, at the point of bayonet, were able to capture Tatya's both the guns. Tatya Tope's troops fell back to defend the bridge with a view to secure Bithur. The British troops faced strong resistance from Tatya, but their sacrifices enabled them to cross the bridge. Thus Tatya lost this battle, yet he could safely extricate his troops from the town without much losses.

#### Casualties :

Havelock writes that in this operation the Company lost 49 soldiers, while nearly 250 revolutionaries were killed or wounded.<sup>9</sup>

#### Deductions :

Unexpected arrival of Brig-Gen. Havelock prevented Tatya Tope in <sup>m</sup>implementing his plan which led to his defeat in this battle. Tatya assumed that the British force would be kept engaged by the nationalist troops in Lucknow sufficiently long enough to enable him to launch an attack on Kanpur. But unfortunately, Havelock returned back to Kanpur before Tatya was fully prepared to face him.

The dense plantations of sugarcane and castor oil provided excellent cover to Tatya's infantry, but this very cover was used by Havelock's troops in screening their own movements and thereby misleading Tatya Tope. Though Tatya Tope was defeated, yet his skill in selecting a strong defensive position the obstinacy with which his troops fought and the guns ~~were~~ <sup>were well</sup> served, established his reputation as a general. General



Havelock paid a complement to them in a despatch in these words :

I must do the mutineers the justice to pronounce that they fought obstinately; otherwise they could not for a whole hour have held their own, even with much advantages of ground, against my powerful artillery fire.<sup>10</sup>

#### Tatya consolidates at Kalpi :

With <sup>his</sup> defeat in the battle of Bithur on August 16, 1857, Tatya's plan and attempt to recapture Kanpur failed. Therefore, Tatya felt the need of having another stronghold which could serve as a base for his military operations. His eyes fell on the strong fort of Kalpi, which being situated on a precipitous rock on the right bank of the river Yamuna, was an ideal place for the purpose from strategic view point. His main objective - Kanpur was only 47 miles east of it, and yet river Yamuna flowing between the two cities offered a natural barrier. Secondly, it offered the advantage of a central position between- Fatehpur (Nana's place of exile), Jhansi (the friendly state) and Gwalior - whose large army Tatya wanted to win over. Tatya Tope captured Kalpi in no time, and when Nana Saheb came to know of this success, he sent Rao Saheb there to assist Tatya.

#### Struggle to recapture Kanpur :

After establishing a base at Kalpi and winning over the Gwalior contingent,<sup>11</sup> Tatya advanced to recapture Kanpur with confidence. As a result two battles, one after the other, were fought at Kanpur. In the initial battle fought on November 27, 1857, Tatya Tope defeated the British troops under the command of Maj-Gen. Windham and compelled them to seek refuge in the entrenchment, but in the other battle fought on December 6, 1857, Tatya Tope was forced to retreat by Sir Colin Campbell.



BATTLE OF KANPUR : (November 27, 1857)

Sir Colin Campbell, leaving about 500 Europeans and a few Sikhs under the command of Maj-Gen. Windham for the defence of Kanpur, led his forces to help Lucknow Residency on November 9, 1857. Campbell had instructed Windham to improve the entrenchment which had been constructed on the river-bank with a view to guard the vital bridge of boats and to present a difficult front to the nationalist troops, but not to move out of the entrenchment unless compelled by the threat of bombardment.<sup>12</sup> Tatya Tope was well served by his spies, who kept him informed about Campbell's movements. Therefore, on November 10, 1857, that is the day following the Commander-in-Chief's departure to Lucknow, Tatya Tope crossed river Yamuna to recapture Kanpur, leaving behind a strong force of 3000 men with 20 guns for the defence of his base at Kalpi.

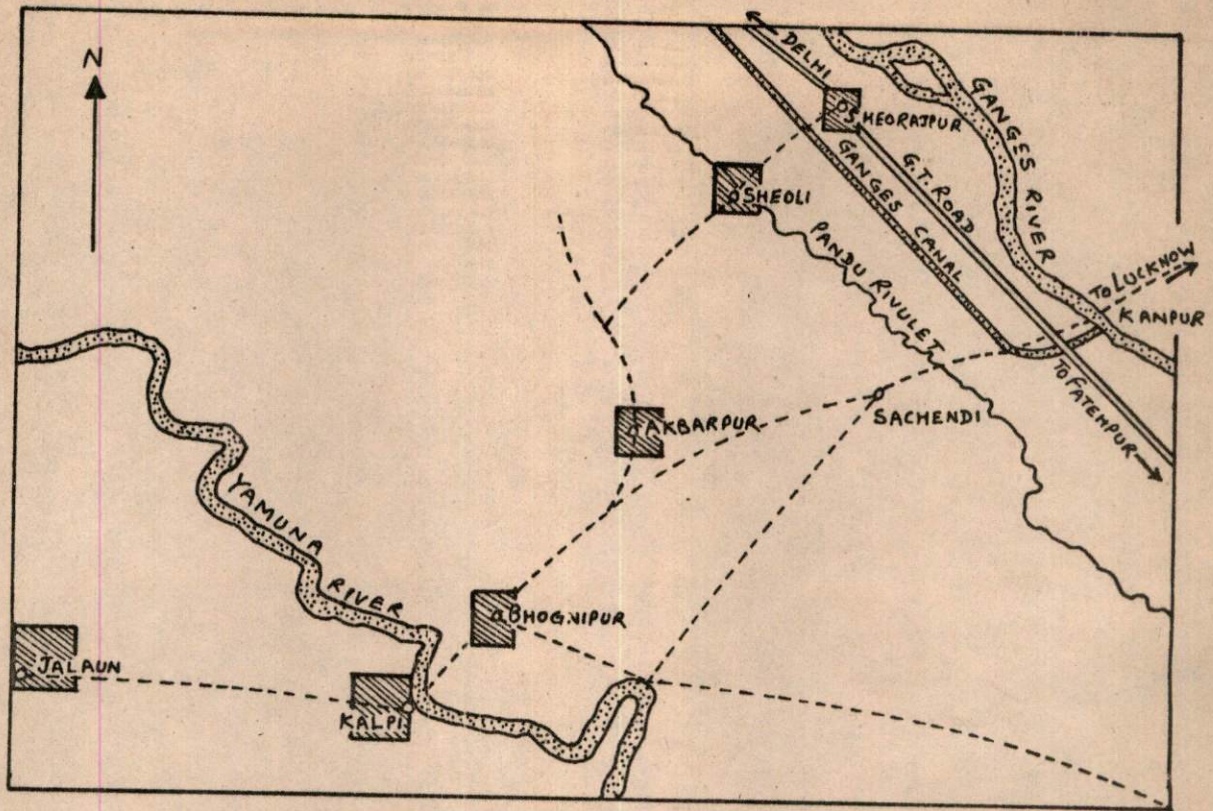
Tatya Tope's deployment :

Leading a large force Tatya Tope, instead of opting for a shorter route via Sachendi, advanced towards Kanpur via Bhognipur, Akbarpur, Sheoli and Sheorajpur with a view to mislead the enemy. He ~~at~~ deployed 1200 men with 4 guns at Bhognipur, 2000 men with 6 guns at Akbarpur, 2000 men with 4 guns at Sheoli and 1000 men with 4 guns at Sheorajpur for the defence of these places. Thus, by November 19, 1857, Tatya was placed in a dominating position between Kanpur and Kalpi. Now he was poised for an attack on Kanpur, keeping the enemy on the tenterhooks regarding his real intentions.

Windham's preparations :

The approach of Tatya Tope's troops alarmed Windham and he felt that it would be a folly to remain inactive. He therefore, asked Sir Colin Campbell for permission to retain reinforcements. Thus he considerably succeeded in augmenting his troops. On November 24, 1857, Windham got the information that Tatya's





TATYA TOPE'S DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS  
NOVEMBER 17, 1857.



real intention was to capture Kanpur. He decided to face Tatya's troops outside the entrenchment, therefore, leaving a small force for the defence of the entrenchment, Windham moved out with 1200 infantry, 100 Cavalry and 12 guns<sup>13</sup> towards the bridge over a canal<sup>12</sup> on the way to Kalpi. He wanted to attack Tatya's troops in an irregular manner.

#### Conduct of the battle :

Tatya Tope was a gifted general. When he was informed that Windham had taken position near the bridge, he pushed forward his force. The main body advanced from Akbarpur to Sachendi, while his advance guard, consisting of 2500 infantry, 500 ~~sakakany~~ cavalry with two 18-inch howitzers and two field-guns,<sup>14</sup> took up position on the Pandu Nadi, only three miles from Windham's Camp.

#### First Phase : (November 26, 1857)

Windham decided to launch an attack on Tatya's troops and after inflicting ~~casualties~~, to return to the camp, remain on the defensive and cover the entrenchment. Accordingly, he pushed forward his force to attack Tatya's advance guard. As soon as the British troops approached the Pandu Nadi, Tatya's troops opened a heavy fire from their siege and field guns. A swarm of Tatya's horsemen charged from the ~~extreme~~<sup>2</sup> left of the 34th Regiment, but were forced to retire by enemy's ~~heavy~~<sup>a</sup> shelling. The British line continued its advance in face of Tatya's ~~extremely~~<sup>x</sup> heavy fire, rapidly crossed the river bed and captured the position. Thus, after a short but sharp fight of one and a half hour, Tatya's troops retired to rejoin their mainbody leaving two guns.<sup>15</sup>

Though on November 26, 1857, Windham forced Tatya's troops to retreat, but if he thought that he had cowed down Tatya, he was mistaken, because he had not yet met the main body of the force. Malleon correctly says :



The leader of the rebel army (Tatya) was no fool. The blow dealt by Wyndham, far from frightening him, had disclosed to his mind the weakness of the British leader. Tatya Tope read then the necessities of Wyndham's position, as he would have read an open book and with the instincts of a real general he resolved to take advantage of them.<sup>16</sup>

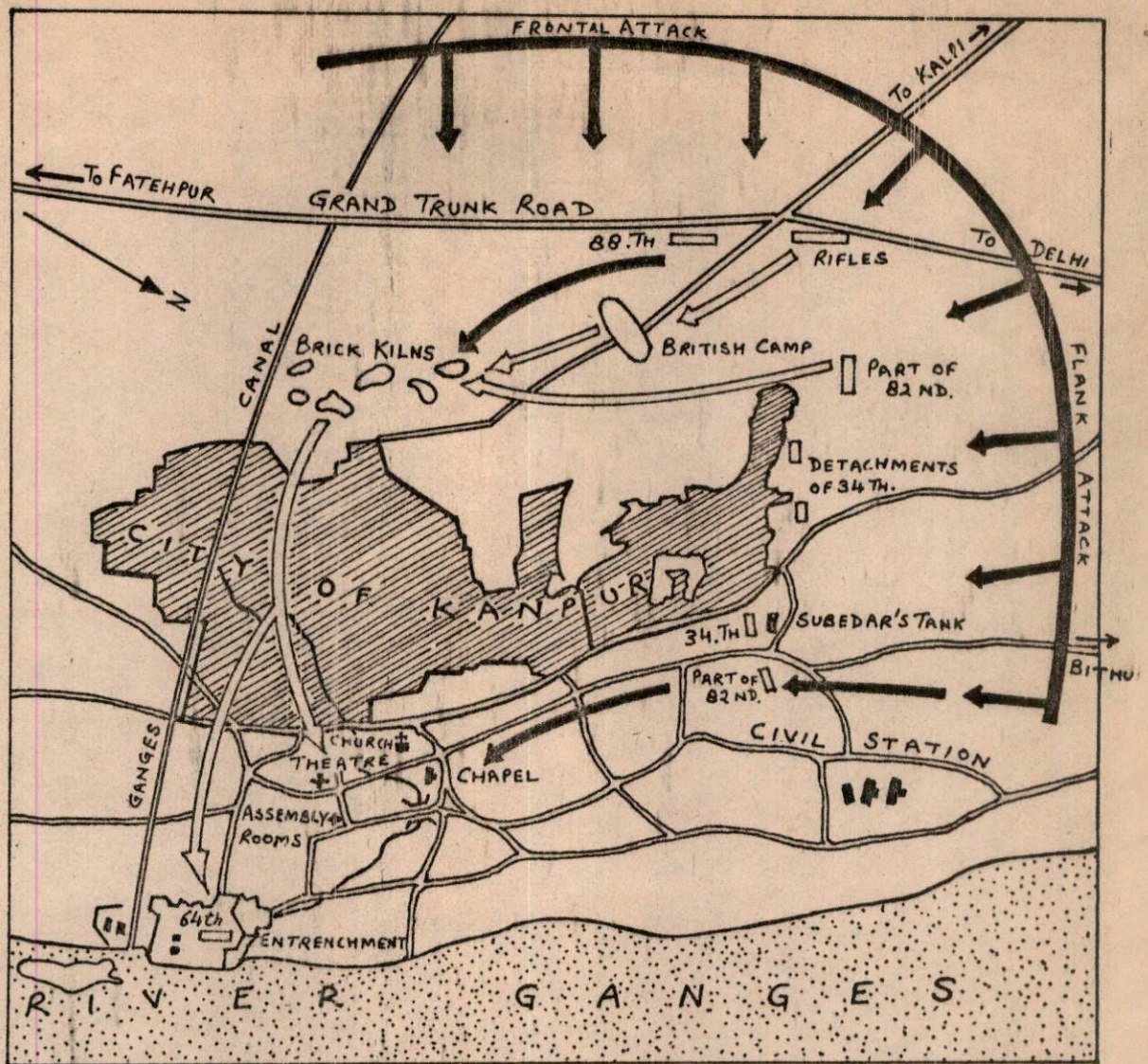
Second Phase : (November 27, 1857)

Tatya Tope realized the imperative necessity of attacking and annihilating Windham's small force before it receives<sup>d</sup> fresh reinforcements. He decided to launch an attack on the British position without delay, therefore, he brought his detachments from Sheoli and Sheorajpur.



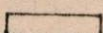
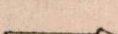
Meanwhile, Windham had deployed his troops with a view to meet the double threat developing from Kalpi and Bithur roads respectively. Brig. Carthew's force comprising the 34th Regiment, two companies of the 82nd Regiment, supported by four 6-pounder guns guarded the right flank and watched the Bithur road. The guns were in the centre, protected by two companies of the 82nd Regiment (less 50 men). The 34th Regiment on the left took up position in the gardens. Fifty men of the 82nd Regiment on the right were posted in some ruined huts. Another force under the command of Col. Walpole of the Rifle Brigade, consisted of four companies of the 2nd Bn. from the Rifle Brigade, the 88th Regiment, two 9-pounder guns and two 24-pounder howitzers and two 24-pounder guns manned by seamen of the Shannon. The guns were in the centre, supported by the Rifle Brigade and the 88th Regiment on either flank. Mid-way in a wood between these two forward positions, was posted the main body of the 82nd Regiment.

Tatya Tope's troops were deployed in a semicircle around the British position. At 1000 hours, on November 27, 1857, he launched vigorous artillery attacks on Windham's front and the right flank simultaneously. The volume and intensity of Tatya's flanking fire inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy.





## BATTLE OF KANPUR NOVEMBER 27, 1857.

DEPLOYMENT OF TATYA'S TROOPS . . . . .   
 ATTACK BY TATYA'S TROOPS . . . . .   
 DEPLOYMENT OF BRITISH TROOPS . . . . .   
 RETREAT BY BRITISH TROOPS . . . . . 



Though Windham tried to subdue this fire by one of the 24-pounders operated by men of the Shannon, but all in vain. Tatyasaheb's guns were superior in numbers and in calibre. The battle raged for several hours and at last Windham ordered his troops to withdraw in the rear, near the brick-kilns. In order to safeguard his retreat, he ordered the 34th Regiment on the right flank to reinforce him. When Tatyasaheb found that the British main front had cracked, and the right flank weakened, he launched vigorous infantry and cavalry attacks, with a view to open a way to the town and the British entrenchment. On the right flank, Brig. Carthew's force weakened by the withdrawal of the 34th Regiment could not hold his ground and fell back in the rear near the brick-kilns. Thus by 1700 hours, the British troops had withdrawn in disorder on the brick-kilns, and Tatyasaheb's troops had occupied the lower part of the city and were planning to attack the entrenchment.

At this critical stage, a detachment of the 2nd Bn. Rifle Brigade arrived from Fatehpur, which pushed back Tatyasaheb's troops from the lower part of the city. This fresh reinforcement prevented Windham's position from taking an ugly turn. Now, Windham ordered Brig. Carthew to take up position at the Theatre with a view to keep Tatyasaheb's troops away from the entrenchment, and protect the Assembly rooms, which contained valuable military stores.

Meanwhile, the British troops at the brick-kilns failed to counter Tatyasaheb's vigorous attacks and were forced to take shelter in the entrenchment. These demoralised troops withdrew in confusion, leaving their stores and baggage. According to an English officer :

The English troops with their trophies and their ~~many~~ mottos and far-famed bravery were repulsed and lost their camp, their baggage and position to the scouted and despised



natives of India. The beaten Feringies, as the enemy has now a right to call them, have retreated to their entrenchments amidst overturned tents, pillage baggage, men's kits, ~~xxx~~ fleeing camels, elephants and horses and servants. All this is most melancholy and ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~. disgraceful.<sup>17</sup>

### Third phase : (November 28, 1857)

Now Windham, anticipating a double thrust towards the entrenchment and bridge of boats by Tatyá Tope, deployed his troops in the following manner : Col. Walpole, with a strong force supported by 4 guns, was ordered to protect the town on the left of the canal. Windham, himself, took up position in the rear with a view to support the forward position. Brig. H. Wilson was ordered to guard the entrenchment with a forward picket at the Baptist Chapel, and Brig. Carthew to hold the Bithur Road ahead of the Baptist Chapel. Having made these defensive preparations Windham looked forward for Tatyá's attack.

Tatyá Tope was aware of the fact that it was a race against the time, for Sir Colin Campbell was coming back from Lucknow to help Windham. Therefore, without losing time, he ordered to launch vigorous attacks on both sides of the city in the morning of November, 28, 1857. His plan was to make a double thrust towards the entrenchment, but while keeping up pressure on Walpole's brigade, he intended to apply his entire force on the Bithur road, whose possession would enable him to bombard not only the entrenchment but the bridge of boats also.

Tatyá Tope successfully carried out his plan. His troops attacked Walpole's force and contained them along with Windham's small force in the rear. With the help of heavy cannonade on Carthew's force Tatyá launched his main attack from the direction of the Bithur road, which caused heavy casualties on the British side. Tatyá's cavalry and infantry made wild charges on British skirmishers and cut them (including Brig. Wilson) into pieces, and occupied all the commanding positions - the houses, garden-



walls and the Church.<sup>18</sup> At dusk, Windham ordered his troops to take up position in the entrenchment. Much panic and confusion was caused among the withdrawing Europeans on account of the cannonading by Tatya's troops. "The men got out of hand" writes Forbes-Mitchell, "and fled for the fort with a loss of over three hundred - mostly killed, because the wounded who fell into the hands of the enemy were cut to pieces, and several guns".<sup>19</sup> The Rev. Mr. Moore, Chaplain with General Windham's force, has thus described the panic amongst the flying soldiers:

The men got quite out of hand and fled pell-mell for the fort. An old Sikh Sardar at the gate tried to stop them, and to form them up in some order, and when they pushed him aside and rushed past him, he lifted up his hands and said, "you are not the brothers of the men who beat the Khalsa army and conquered the Punjab".<sup>20</sup>

Thus, by skilful tactics, Tatya Tope had driven the British force into the entrenchment. Now the entire city of Kanpur was in his hands.<sup>21</sup>

#### Casualties :

In this fierce battle, the casualties on the side of Tatya were very light, whereas the British suffered heavy casualties. They lost more than 300 soldiers and several guns. Brig. Wilson was killed, and Major Stirling and Capt. Murphy were wounded severely.<sup>22</sup> Huge military stores - about 11,000 cartridges, 500 tents, saddles and uniforms worth Rs. 5 Lacs fell in Tatya's hands.<sup>23</sup>

#### Deductions :

By driving back the British force into the entrenchment, Tatya Tope established his reputation as a great general. Tatya's plan to seize Kanpur before Sir Colin Campbell's return and cut-off his base of operations was an enterprising bold strategic move. He exhibited considerable skill in the strategic deployment of his troops. His strategy aimed at achieving the following twin objects :



1. To move forward slowly so as to give sufficient time to Sir Colin Campbell to get deeply involved in Lucknow operations, thus preventing his return to Kanpur.
2. To deploy his forces in such a manner to indicate that he intended to reinforce the nationalist force at Lucknow, rather than to attack the weak garrison at Kanpur.

Windham ignored the positive instructions of not to move out of the entrenchment given by the Commander-in-chief, and was misled by Tatya to play a game to his own benefit. Tatya wanted to draw out the British force from the defensive position and annihilate it by his numerically superior force. By sheer weight of numbers Tatya attacked the British position and compelled Windham to beat a hasty retreat.

Thus this battle proved conclusively that Tatya Tope was a great strategist, as well as a shrewd tactician. By his strategic move he had succeeded in securing the city of Kanpur and by his skilful tactics he had driven the British force into the entrenchment.

#### Sir Colin Campbell arrives at Kanpur :

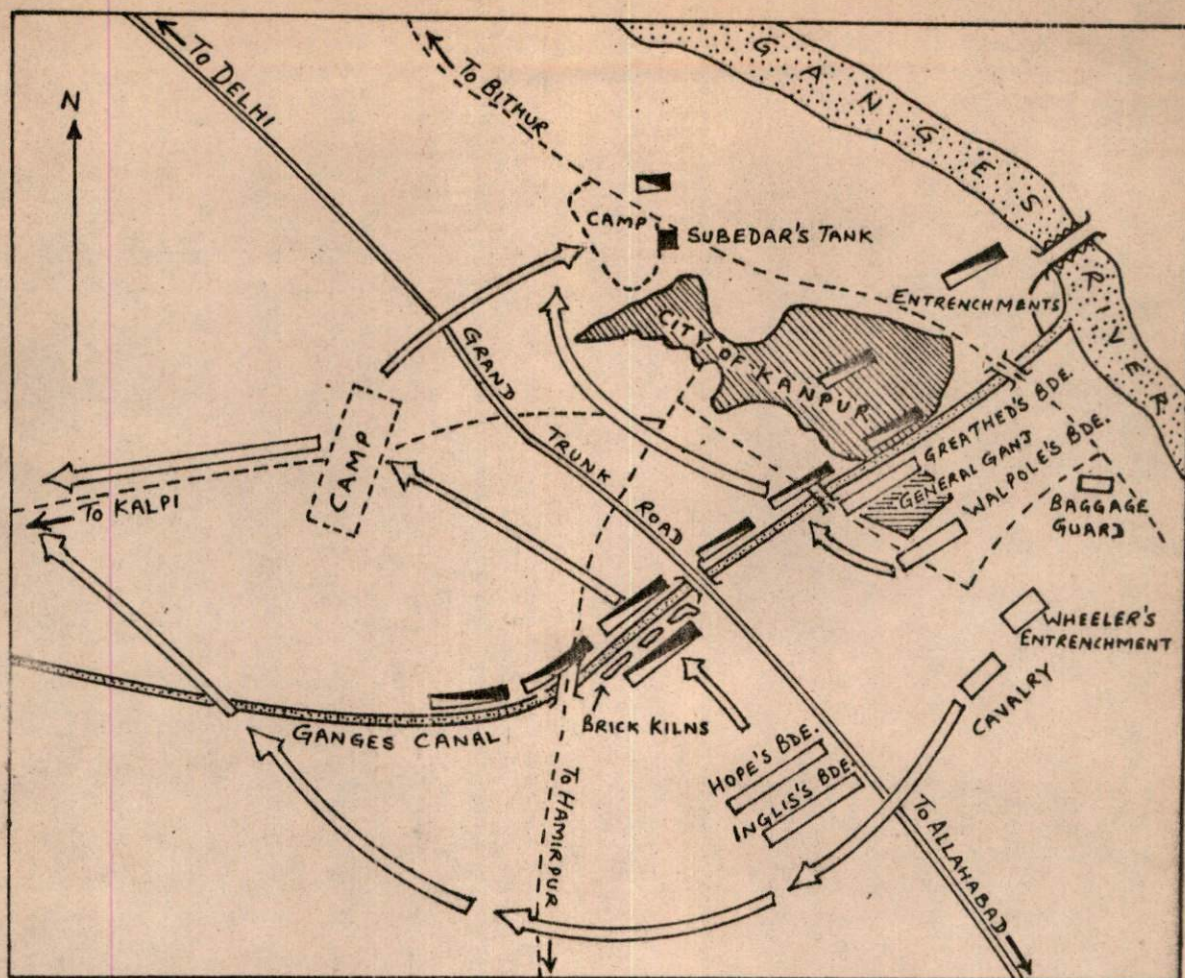
Sir Colin Campbell received alarming reports about the situation in Kanpur alongwith a call for immediate assistance, on November 28, 1857.<sup>24</sup> He immediately pushed on and encamped four miles from Kanpur. Leaving his troops and convoy behind, the Commander-in-chief galloped forth with a handful of men and found the bridge of boats on the river Ganges intact. It remains a mystery as to why Tatya Tope did not bring forward his heavy guns to destroy the bridge, which had to be destroyed before Campbell's arrival.

On November 29, Tatya rushed his guns to blow up the bridge, but it was too late as Campbell had arrived and deployed









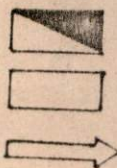
## BATTLE OF KANPUR

DECEMBER 6, 1857.

DEPLOYMENT OF TATYA'S TROOPS . . .

DEPLOYMENT OF BRITISH TROOPS . . .

ATTACK BY BRITISH TROOPS . . .





40 guns. These troops were deployed in two separate masses, each having its own line of retreat. The forces of the left flank were positioned in ~~the~~ the wooded high grounds, intersected with naals (dry water courses) and covered with ruined bungalows in the old cantonment, situated between the town and the river Ganges. The centre occupied the town itself, whose streets were strongly barricaded. The part of the centre bounded by the Ganges Canal opposite the forward posts of the British force was held in strength by Tatya's troops. The right flank stretched out behind the canal at a short distance beyond the canal crossing on the ~~Ganga~~ Grand Trunk Road, and they held most of the bridge on the canal, some brick kilns and mounds of brick in its front. Gwalior contingent's camp, covering the road to Kalpi was two miles in the rear. The Gwalior Contingent was commanded by Tatya Tope himself.

#### Campbell plans an attack :

After making an appreciation of the situation, Sir Colin Campbell observed that the weak point in Tatya's deployment was his right flank which rested on an open plain, the canal forming an only obstacle. Here the walls of the town afforded cover to his attacking columns, whereas prevented the movement of Tatya's troops from the left and centre to support the right. Therefore, he planned to engage Tatya's left and centre with a sufficient force to mislead him of the main attack, and to launch the real and forceful attack on the right flank. After crushing the right, his plan was to seize the camp of the Gwalior contingent and establish himself on Tatya's line of retreat with a view to separate it from Nana's force and defeat the revolutionaries in detail.<sup>30</sup>

#### Campbell's deployment :

Sir Colin Campbell's force consisted of 5000 infantry, 600 cavalry and 35 guns. On the right was deployed Brig. Greathed's



Brigade (consisting of the 8th Foot and 2nd Punjab Infantry) to engage Tatya's left and centre with a view to distract their attention from the main attack. In its rear was ~~Walpole's~~ Walpole's Brigade (consisting of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions Rifle Brigade, and a detachment of the 38th Foot, supported by a field battery, Royal Artillery) which was ordered to cross the bridge immediately on the left of Brig. Greathed's position with a view to prevent Tatya's right flank from getting reinforcement from the centre or left. The main attack was to be launched from his left, where two brigades were deployed - Hope's Brigade (consisting of the 53rd Foot, the 42nd Highlanders, the 93rd Highlanders and the 4th Punjab Infantry) in the front; and Inglis's Brigade (consisting of the 23rd Fusiliers, the 32nd Foot and the 82nd Foot) in the rear. These brigades were ordered to drive out the nationalist's troops entrenched in the brick mounds, capture the bridge and advance to the Kalpi Road. Windham, from the entrenchment, was ordered to fire heavily on Tatya's left and centre to mislead him of the real target of powerful attack.

#### Conduct of the battle :

At 0900 hours on December 6, 1857, the batteries located in the entrenchment opened fire.<sup>31</sup> The artillery duel lasted for two hours. Now Greathed's brigade on the right advanced towards the canal and poured sharp musket fire on Tatya's troops. The Walpole's brigade crossed the bridge and pushed on to the city-wall to prevent Tatya's troops on the left and the centre from reinforcing the threatened right flank. Tatya's right flank was subjected to heavy fire from enemy's artillery. Under the cover of this terrific artillery fire British force advanced in three parallel lines towards the canal. When the skirmishers approached the brick-kilns, Tatya's troops fired vigorously but the 53rd Regiment and Sikhs ~~xxx~~ rushed on and ejected Tatya's men from their advanced



position, protected by the brick-kilns. Tatya's troops defended the bridge with firm determination. Their musket fire and grape retarded the advance of the British troops and compelled them to fall back. But the British gunners quickly pushed forward a heavy 24-pounder gun,<sup>32</sup> and the two British Brigades rushed forward and crossed on reaching the other side of the canal, they resumed their formation and advanced to attack Tatya Tope's troops. But Tatya proved too clever for them. As soon as the British troops crossed the canal, he ordered his entire force to withdraw on the road to Kalpi.<sup>33</sup> Campbell the camp of Gwalior Contingent at 1400 hours and took immediate steps to pursue Tatya's troops. The 23rd and the 38th Regiments were ordered to guard the captured camp. As the cavalry, which had been ordered to cross the canal by a bridge, further to the left, had not yet arrived, Bouchier's battery accompanied by Sir Hope Grant set out to pursue Tatya's troops for two miles, for further 14 miles Tatya was pursued by the British cavalry. Though, their ammunition and baggage were left behind, yet Tatya's entire force practically escaped without losses from the battle field.

Meanwhile, nationalists' troops deployed on the centre and the left also managed to retreat by Bithur road. General Mansfield was ordered to circumvent and cut-off their line of retreat.<sup>34</sup> His force moved round the back of the town to attack them at the Subedar's Tank, but ultimately he failed to prevent their escape. Thus, with day's dusk the battle of Kanpur was over.

#### Casualties :

Tatya's large quantity of ammunition, baggage and other fighting material alongwith 16 guns fell in British hands.<sup>35</sup> The British casualties were about 99 men killed or wounded.



Pursuit by Brig. Hope Grant :

On December 8, 1858, the Commander-in-chief ordered Brig. Hope Grant with 2700 men to pursue Tatya's troops. Arriving at Bithur, he learnt that the sepoys were at Sarai Ghat, a ferry about 25 miles above Kanpur on the Ganges. When he arrived there early morning, nationalist troops were already embarking their guns. He attacked them instantly with his cavalry and artillery and after half an hour's sharp fighting nationalist troops were once again forced to retreat leaving 15 guns alongwith large quantities of ammunition, stores, carts, waggons and bullocks.<sup>36</sup>

Deductions :

Tatya Tope's plans to recapture Kanpur were shattered on account of his failure to blow up the bridge of boats before arrival of Sir Colin Campbell. It was a race against time, therefore, the bridge should have been destroyed immediately after ~~xxxxx~~ forcing Carthew's forces to fall back in the entrenchment on November 27, 1857. He did a blunder by not blowing the bridge on the night of 27/28 November, 1857, which could have prevented the British force from crossing the bridge. Tatya ~~k~~ new that Campbell was a war veteran, therefore, his strategy was based on the fundamental principle of not staking the entire army on a single front of the battle. He deployed his troops with a view to extricate them from untenable position in case of repulsion.

Tatya Tope deployed his troops in two separate masses, each having its own line of <sup>e</sup>retreat. The forces of the centre and the left flank were to retire on Bithur Road, whereas, the forces of the right flank were to retire towards Kalpi. Though, this strategic deployment of the forces was faulty, for it enabled Campbell to fall on one of the two separate positions



and defeat it before it could receive assistance from the other force. But, inspite of its obvious disadvantage, it served Tatya's main purpose of extricating his force intact after suffering a repulse. Thus, Tatya Tope's skill in effecting wonderful retreat without sustaining much losses to his war-machine-men and material, redounds of his credit.

#### CAMPAIGN IN BUNDELKHAND

After Tatya's defeat in the battle of Kanpur (December, 6 1857) against Sir Colin Campbell, he concentrated his activities in Bundelkhand. Without any signs of defeat at Kanpur, he made a very bold military advance from Kalpi to Charkhari, the capital of a small Bundela state.

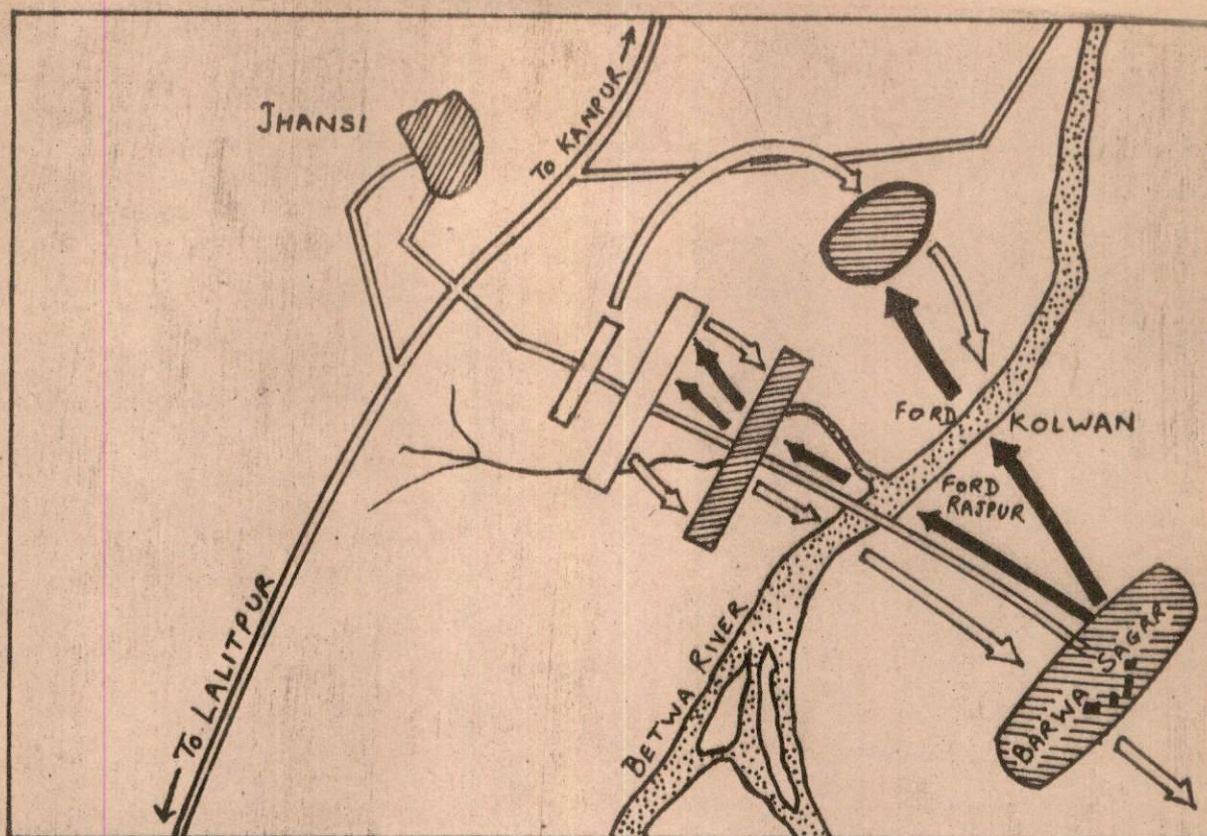
#### BATTLE OF BETWA : (April 1, 1858)

After capturing Charkhari<sup>37</sup> Tatya Tope advanced towards Jhansi with a view to launch a surprise attack on the British forces which had sieged Jhansi. On March 30, 1858, Tatya Tope arrived at Barwa Sagar,<sup>38</sup> about 3 miles from the Betwa.

#### Sir Hugh Rose's plan of action :

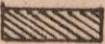

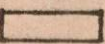
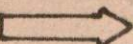
With the arrival of Tatya's force at the outskirts of Jhansi, Sir Hugh Rose found himself sandwiched between the two fronts of nationalist forces. He decided to carry on the siege of Jhansi uninterrupted, therefore, he left some of the troops of the 1st Brigade and a battery there. Taking the rest of his force numbering 1500 men, Sir Hugh Rose advanced and drew it up in two columns<sup>39</sup> across the road facing Betwa. His first line consisted of the 2nd Brigade. In the centre were the 3rd<sup>3</sup> Europeans, detachment of the 24th Bombay Native Infantry and the Hyderabad Infantry, supported by 3 heavy guns.





## BATTLE OF BETWA

APRIL 1, 1858.

- DEPLOYMENT OF TATYA'S TROOPS ... 
- ATTACK BY TATYA'S TROOPS ... 
- DEPLOYMENT OF BRITISH TROOPS ... 
- ATTACK BY BRITISH TROOPS ... 



On the right flank, there was a troop of the 14th Light Dragoons and one of the Hyderabad Cavalry, supported by 4 Horse Artillery guns. On the left flank, there were two troops of the 14th Light Dragoons, supported by a field battery. The second line consisted of the 1st Brigade. In the centre, there was 86th Regiment with detachments of the 25th Bombay Native Infantry, supported by a battery of 6-pounders, and a battery of 9-pounders. 14th Light Dragoons were on the right flank and the Hyderabad Cavalry on the left flank. Cavalry pickets and lines of Vedettes were thrown out well to the front and the flanks.

#### Tatya's deployment :

Tatya Tope's force consisted of 22,000 men<sup>40</sup> with 30 guns. A large part of his force crossed the upper ford at Rajpur in the evening of March 30, 1858, and took position in front of the British force. The deployment had two parameters. The second parameter was commanded by Tatya himself. The rest of Tatya's force was ordered to cross the lower ford at Kolwan in order to turn the Britisher's left flank<sup>41</sup> into a front.

#### Conduct of the battle :

Sir Hugh Rose got timely information of Tatya's move, therefore, in the midnight, he ordered Brig. Stuart to intercept the adventurers. At 0400 hours on April 1, 1858, Tatya Tope took the initiative and advanced his artillery supported by infantry and cavalry. Having advanced upto 600 yards to the British position, they opened a heavy fire on the enemy. The British batteries opened fire which had no effect on the advancing troops of Tatya Tope. Tatya's musketry matched enemy's musketry very well. Tatya's superior fire showered the enemy's dense formations around the heavy guns in the centre. Therefore, enemy ordered its infantry to lie down.<sup>42</sup>

Tatya Tope, keeping up the pressure on the centre of the British



line, despatched a part of his force to torn the British left flank. Sir Hugh Rose realized the gravity of the situation and decided to prevent Tatyá Tope from outflanking his force. This could be done only by seizing ~~xxx~~ initiative from Tatyá by destroying his flanks, before he could carryout his flanking movement. Therefore, Sir Hugh Rose ordered the artillery from both flanks of the line to advance and crush Tatyá's gunners by an enfilade fire. In this movement, a round shot broke the wheel of a Horse Artillery gun.<sup>43</sup> Then Rose ordered the Hyderabad cavalry to charge Tatyá's battery which was creating havoc. Thrice did the cavalry charge and thrice were they hurled back by showers of grape and volleys. Tatyá's troops followed them up and killed many men and horses, and also wounded their leader severely.

Now Sir Hugh Rose, placing himself at the head of a troop of Dragoons, attacked on Tatyá's left flank, while two troops of Dragoons charged on the right. Both the attacks were successful in turning Tatyá's flanks<sup>44</sup> of the first parameter and forced them to fall-back. As the flanks retired, the centre also rushed to join the second parameter commanded by Tatyá Tope himself.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, Brig. Stuart with a detachment of 1st Brigade - which was sent to intercept Tatyá's turning movement, encountered a force of about 2000 men entrenched in a village. The British artillery shelled the village heavily, while the infantry advanced in skirmishing order with their flanks protected by the cavalry. A bayonet charge compelled Tatyá's troops to vacate the village. Though they rallied again in another village in the rear, but were ejected from this position too. Therefore, they formed themselves in<sup>2c</sup> compact body covered by a strong rear guard and retired towards Rejpur ford.

Seeing his first parameter routed and his right flanking Columns driven back by Stuart, Tatyá Tope resolved to disengage



and extricate his forces. He ordered the artillery to fire on the advancing British troops and thus kept them engaged for sometime. In the meantime, he put fire to the jungle and under cover of this smoke-screen he extricated a very large part of his troops ingeniously.

#### Casualties :

Though, Tatyasaheb lost all the guns and about 1500 men of his force dead or wounded, but he managed to save a very large part of his army.

#### Deductions :

Tatyasaheb's strategy was excellent but the timely information gained by Sir Hugh Rose about his movements enabled the latter to deploy his forces in such a manner, which could meet the threatened Tatyasaheb's attack successfully. Tatyasaheb followed sound tactics by containing British troops with the help of a part of his force and using rest of his force to envelop the British left flank. But Sir Hugh Rose checked this move by sending Stuart to carry out a wide flanking movement to envelop Tatyasaheb's force, which was trying to turn the left flank by the main British force.

With Tatyasaheb's defeat in the battle of Betwa, his mission to rescue Jhansi failed. For this failure, the Rani's troops were also responsible. If Rani's troops had joined Tatyasaheb from the other side in fighting, then the British force would have been sandwiched between the two strong forces. A double attack -- one directed by Tatyasaheb and the other by Rani, would have led to the total defeat and destruction of the British force. Sylvester also blames the Rani's garrison and writes :

Why the garrison did not, make a sortie, and destroy batteries, while the Peshwa's army was attempting their rescue from without, it is impossible to imagine. Their overpowering numbers must have been successful, however well our infantry and gunners might have stood to their guns. They may have been deterred by a false attack made by Major Gall and Captain Field, R.A., on a distant part of the City wall.<sup>46</sup>



Sir John Fortesque also attributes inaction on the part of Rani's men terrified by a false attack devised under orders<sup>s</sup> from Sir Hugh Rose, and therefore, they did not dare to sallyout against the besiegers during the day and also failed to attack the British troops at night when the latter must have been utterly exhausted by their exertions.<sup>47</sup>

#### BATTLE OF KUNCH : (May 7, 1858)

Tatya's defeat in the battle of Betwa sealed the fate of Jhansi, and it fell in the British hands on April 3, 1858. Rani of Jhansi escaped to join Tatya Tope and Rao Saheb at Kalpi.<sup>48</sup> Undeterred by his defeat at Betwa, Tatya with~~his~~ his characteristic resourcefulness again succeeded in collecting troops as well as guns. They were further reinforced by some native chiefs.

Tatya knew that Sir Hugh Rose would soon be on him. Therefore, in order to check the British advance on Kalpi, Tatya Tope opted to meet the enemy at the strategic town of Kunch, 42 miles from Kalpi on the Jhansi Road.

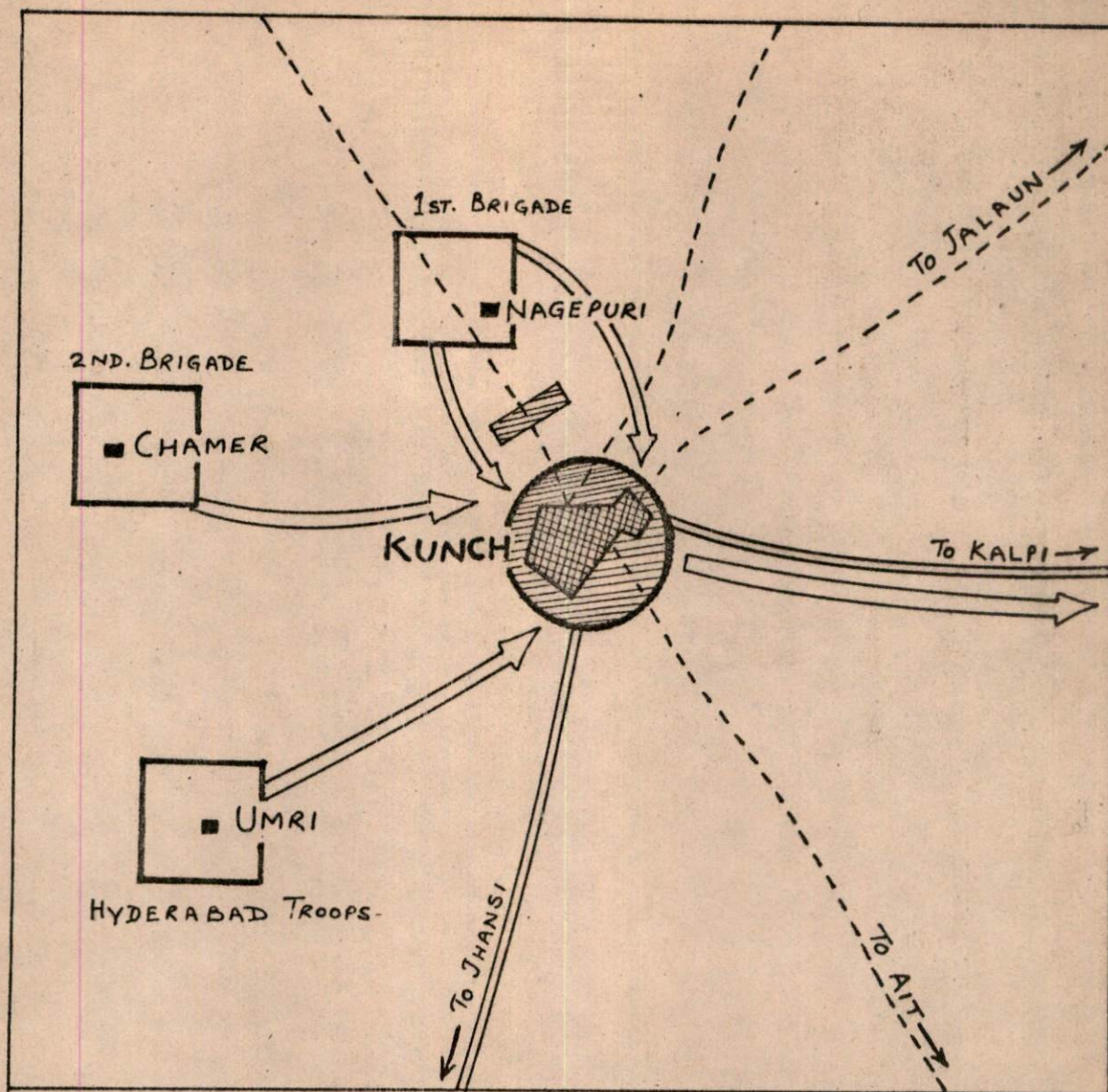
#### Topography :

Kunch was an open town with a series of strong defence, making it difficult to be approached.<sup>49</sup> It was protected by a strong wall and entrenchments were constructed in front of it. The woods, gardens and temples skirting the city offered good cover.



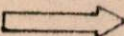
#### Sir Hugh Rose's deployment :

Tatya Tope had concentrated his troops in the centre expecting a frontal attack by the British, but Sir Hugh Rose decided to turn Tatya's right flank. Therefore, he made a flanking advance covering about 14 miles and occupied a position, two miles from Kunch. The British forces were in position by 0700 hours on May 7, 1858. The 1st Brigade in Nagopuri village formed





# BATTLE OF KUNCH MAY 7, 1858.

DEPLOYMENT OF TATYA'S TROOPS .....   
 DEPLOYMENT OF BRITISH TROOPS .....   
 ATTACK BY BRITISH TROOPS ..... 



his left flank, the Hyderabad troops under Maj. Orr in Umri village formed his right flank and the 2nd Brigade in Chamer village was his centre.<sup>50</sup>

#### Conduct of the battle :

On May 7, 1858, Sir Hugh Rose ordered for a three-pronged attack on Munch to force his entry into it. The main attack, however, <sup>was</sup> to be made by the 1st Brigade led by Sir Hugh Rose himself. While the 1st Brigade was holding the position in Nagapuri, Tatya's cavalry established strong pickets outside the wood. The British guns opened fire and dispersed them unmasking the masses of infantry, which had taken position behind a long wall in front of the 1st Brigade and in the wood to the left of it. The two - one 18-pounder and one 8-inch howitzer guns battered the wall, while the Horse Artillery advanced and shelled the infantry to the left of the wall. After a short but sharp artillery duel, the British guns succeeded in silencing the native battery.

Now Sir Hugh Rose decided to drive Tatya's troops out of the wood, gardens and temples, which surrounded Kunch, and thereafter to storm the town, including a ~~xxxx-xxx~~ ruined mud-fort. Rose divided his 1st Brigade on the left flank in two lines. The first line was to launch an attack, while the second line acted as a reserve. The first line advanced to attack in skirmishing order. The skirmishers of the 25th Bombay Native Infantry supported by muskets and guns charged Tatya's troops in the wood, gardens and temples and occupied them<sup>51</sup> in spite of equal resistance from Tatya's troops. Meanwhile, a wing of the 86th Regiment supported by 3 Horse Artillery guns and a troop of the 14th Light Dragoons turned to the left, and despite heavy fire, took all the obstacles along with the fort. Tatya Tope, however, tried to launch a counter-attack but was dislodged by enemy's cavalry supported by a field battery. After a grim fight of about an hour, Tatya Tope's right flank was weakened and his troops started retreating to Kalpi.



The 2nd Brigade, with the exception of an advance in skirmishing order by its 71st Highlanders, did little. It remained "grilling under the enemy's fire throughout the greater part of the ~~day~~ day".<sup>52</sup> On the right flank Maj. Orr sent his infantry to storm the wall and gardens in his front. They succeeded in driving Tatya's troops from these places but a sharp counter-attack drove them back in disorder to their original position. Thus neither the 2nd Brigade, nor Maj. Orr's Hyderabad troops could force their entry in the town. It was only due to 1st Brigade's success in capturing the fort from the right flank, which proved useful for the British troops.

#### Tatya's skilful retreat :

The task of pursuing the retreating Tatya's troops was taken up by the cavalry of both the brigades and Maj. Orr's force, supported by Horse Artillery and light field guns. Tatya Tope's troops commenced their retreat across the plain with resolution and intelligence. They felt demoralized when many of their skirmishers were killed and their guns captured by the enemy, but by this time British pursuers were also too exhausted to press on the pursuit. Sir Hugh Rose in his despatch gives a description of the harassing nature of the pursuit :

The Horse Artillery and cavalry were now so beaten by sun and fatigue, that they were reduced to a walk, the guns were only able to rake the column ~~in~~ in its depth with round shot and shell, but could not approach sufficiently close to give it grape. The Cavalry on their part had only strength to reach the numerous stragglers, who could not keep up with the enemy's main body. On reaching some wood and broken ground about a village, seven or eight miles from Koonch, profiting by this cover, they sought safety from attack by breaking into scattered flight across the country.<sup>53</sup>

#### Casualties :

In this battle the British casualties were 9 killed and 47



wounded. There were also 45 fatal cases of sunstroke<sup>CK</sup>. Tatya lost 9 guns and about 600 men in action and pursuit. The 52nd Bengal Native Infantry Regiment, which covered the retreat, was nearly destroyed.

Deductions :

Tatya Tope's genius in extricating his forces is evident from his masterly retreat to Kalpi. Maj-Gen. Sir Hugh Rose too was so much impressed that he wrote in ~~his~~ his despatch : "The line of skirmishers fought well to protect the retreat of the mainbody, observing the rules of Light Infantry Drill. When charged, they threw aside their muskets, and fought desperately with their swords".<sup>54</sup> Sylvester has bestowed high praise on the tenacity with which Tatya Tope's rear-guards conducted the retreat. He ~~writes~~ writes :

Each of the rebels was provided with a Government musket, belt and cartouch box, in captial order, and well provided with cartridges. After firing, down went the musket and outcome the sharp-cutting native sword; they evidently could not use the bayonet. They cut and slashed our horses and men so long as one of their band remained alive.<sup>55</sup>

The above description regarding Tatya's masterly retreat to Kalpi, following the battle of Kunch clearly establishes that Tatya's genius lay not in ~~fighting~~ fighting the pitched battles, but in extricating his forces after they had been beaten.

CAMPAIGN IN CENTRAL INDIA

After his defeat in the battle of Kunch, Tatya Tope went to Churkhi, about four miles from Jalaun, ostensibly to see his parents, who lived there. He slipped away from Churkhi to Gwalior in disguise<sup>56</sup> to make an effort to winover Sindhia's troops to his side, while Rao Saheb, the Rani of Jhansi and Nawab of Banda were organizing Kalpi's defence. Neither Maharaja Sindhia nor his Diwan Dinkar Rao, nor the chief officers



of the army knew anything about Tatya's visit.<sup>57</sup> He secretly contacted Sindhia's troops having grievances against their master. During his stay there, he succeeded in winning Sindhia's troops to his side and found "the instruments of a coup d'etat" ready there. He knew that to appear before the town was to capture it".<sup>58</sup>

Actually Tatya Tope wanted to have a base where revolutionists may assemble and carryout their plans safely, if unfortunately Kalpi - their last stronghold, is runover by the enemy. When Tatya came to know that Sir Hugh Rose had won Kalpi on May 23, 1858,<sup>59</sup> he left Gwalior on May 26 and on the same evening joined Rao Saheb and Rani of Jhansi at Gopalpur<sup>60</sup> - the rendezvous of the revolutionists.

The position of freedom fighters was extremely desperate as their important bases like Kanpur, Jhansi and Kalpi had been won by the enemy. The insurgent struggle seemed to be on the wane. If they had to put vigour into it their most urgent task was to seek a place which could serve as a base for their military operations. They held a meeting of the war council in which delegates of the sepoys were also present.<sup>61</sup> Their urgent needs were funds and supplies. It was decided to winover Gwalior, because it offered an important base with an exceptionally strong fort, ample military stores and immense treasury. This plan received general approval and they proceeded towards Gwalior.

#### Tatya's daring stroke :

On the night of May 31, 1858<sup>62</sup> Tatya Tope, Rani of Jhansi and Rao Saheb with 7000 infantry, 4000 Cavalry and twelve guns<sup>63</sup> reached the outskirts of Gwalior. Maharaja Sindhia with 6000 infantry, 1500 cavalry, his personal body-guard of 600 men and eight guns<sup>64</sup> came forward to attack them. He took up a position two miles east of Morar, divided his troops into three masses and placed the guns in the centre. Tatya's advance



guard consisting of cavalry and camels was subjected to Sindhia's artillery fire<sup>65</sup>, but as the smoke cleared away, Tatya's 2000 horsemen charged and took the guns. At this, most of Sindhia's troops, except his body-guards, deserted and came-over to Tatya's side. Terrified with this fiasco Sindhia and his Diwan Dinker Rao fled to Agra.<sup>66</sup> Thus Gwalior fell to Tatya and about 50 to 60 guns, a huge arsenal and Sindhia's treasury came into his possession.<sup>67</sup> On June 1, 1858, Tatya Tope, Rao Saheb, the Rani of Jhansi entered Gwalior in triumph and proclaimed the Nana as Peshwa.<sup>68</sup>

This daring stroke of strategy took the British by complete surprise. This brilliant coup was master-minded by Tatya Tope *only* because he "anticipated the evacuation of Kalpi by a visit to Gwalior. It was he, who contacted the Sindhia's troops and their officers and convinced Rao Saheb that Gwalior would fall an easy prey to them".<sup>69</sup>

#### BATTLE OF MORAR : (June 16, 1858)

Sir Hugh Rose realized the gravity of the situation, political influence and military strength which Tatya Tope achieved on account of his possession of Gwalior on June 1, 1858. He far foresaw that leaving a part of troops for the defence of Gwalior, Tatya might advance southwards to unfurl Peshwa's flag and thousands of Marathas might flock to strengthen him considerably. Indore too, may follow Gwalior's precedence. Further to it, Gwalior in revolutionist's hands meant cutting-off the British communications with the south. Besides, Gwalior had fallen at a time most ~~unfavourable~~ unfavourable for military operations, that is on the eve of rainy season.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, it became vitally important for the British to check Tatya's further movements before the rainy season sets in, otherwise rivers would burst their banks and the countryside become a sea of mud in which guns could not be moved.

#### ~~Sir Hugh Rose's march towards Morar :~~

~~Sir Hugh Rose took immediate steps to meet this serious threat with all available forces.~~<sup>71</sup> He



Sir Hugh Rose's march towards Morar :

Sir Hugh Rose took immediate steps to meet this serious threat with all available forces.<sup>71</sup> He ordered Maj. Orr commanding the Hyderabad contingent to move from Jhansi to Panjar, on Gwalior-Sipri road, in order to block Tatya's ~~at~~ retreat. Brig. Smith, with the Rajputana Field Force, was directed to move from Sipri to Kota-ki-sarai, about five miles south-east of Gwalior. Col. Riddel, who was escorting a large number of siege guns, was to move from Agra to a point seven miles north of Gwalior to invest the city on the west. Sir Hugh Rose, leaving some troops at Kalpi on June 6, 1858, advanced to Morar ~~with~~ with a view to overtake Stuart's column, which had started for Gwalior on June 1. He overtook Stuart on June 12, at Indurkhi<sup>72</sup> and he combined forces reached Bahadurpur, about five miles east of Morar cantonment, on June 16. Here Brig-Gen. Napier joined them and assumed the command of the second Brigade.

Topography and Tatya's deployment :

The Morar cantonment was five miles from Gwalior and was held by Tatya Topa's troops. It lay on the right bank of the Morar river and was traversed by the road to Gwalior. The country between the cantonment and Bahadurpur was almost open with the exception of a number of Nalas, (drains) in the east, while the country on the south-east was broken and hilly. Tatya Topa's cavalry consisting of 800 Bareilly and Gwalior Horse<sup>73</sup> was holding the cantonment, while the infantry was positioned in the drains and the broken and hilly country. A battery of guns, well camouflaged, was in the centre. Another battery was deployed on the right flank.

Sir Hugh Rose's deployment and plan of attack :

Sir Hugh Rose, determined to capture Morar without loss of time, pushed on and deployed his troops in two lines. The first line commanded by Sir Hugh Rose himself consisted of



(1) the siege guns and a light field-battery in the centre, (2) the 86th Regiment on the right, (3) the 25th Bombay Native Infantry on the left, and (4) the detachments ~~of 14th~~ ~~detachments~~ of 14th Light Dragoons on the flanks. The second line commanded by Brig-Gen. Napier consisted of (1) a wing of 71st Highland Light Infantry with some Madras Sappers and Miners in the Centre, (2) a light field - battery supported by the Hyderabad Horse on the right, and (3) a wing of the 14th Light Dragoons on the left.

Sir Hugh Rose's plan was to outflank Tatya's weak left and cut-off their retreat through the road bridge to the rear of the cantonment towards Gwalior. While the first line was to turn Tatya's left, the second line was to be directed to his right, entrenched in the hilly country and the ravines.

#### Conduct of the battle :

The first line of the British forces moved round Tatya's left flank, leaving some infantry to contain him in the front.<sup>74</sup> But the local guide lost his way, and the sepoys on the flanking movement found themselves under heavy fire from the central battery as well as from the battery on the right. The British troops suffered heavy casualties but the siege-guns, as well as the light field-guns of the second line, succeeded in silencing these batteries. Meanwhile the 86th Regiment on the right advanced in skirmishing order to turn Tatya's left. Perceiving this movement Tatya Tope's troops withdrew their batteries and retired towards the bridge. The 86th Regiment occupied the cantonment. Meanwhile the second line was hotly engaged by Tatya's infantry concealed in the Nalas (drains) on the right. As the British troops approached Nala, Tatya's troops opened a very heavy fire on them, but the skirmishers of the 71st Highland Light Infantry came up and after a severe hand to hand fight succeeded in dislodging them from these ambushes.<sup>75</sup> Britons suffered heavy casualties



because every inch of the ground was fiercely contested, but after two hours' fighting, Sir Hugh Rose captured Morar. The capture of this strategic place gave him the command of the road to Agra, which enabled him to communicate with Dholpur on the right and Kota-ki-Sarai on the left.

#### Casualties :

In this grim battle, Tatya's 100 soldiers were killed while British lost an officer and 15 soldiers.<sup>76</sup>

#### Deductions :

After the seize of Gwalior, revolutionists apparently did nothing to consolidate their position or to prepare to meet the inevitable onslaught. If Rao Saheb, instead of staying at Gwalior, had pushed on <sup>to</sup> the Deccan, he probably could have ~~xxx~~ raised the princes there <sup>77</sup> against the British. But he remained at Gwalior and wasted his time and money in celebrations which were held to commemorate the <sup>e</sup>capture of the town. It was only when the enemy was almost at the door that Rao Saheb hurriedly ordered Tatya Tope to face them. As a result Tatya could not deploy and manage his forces as he should have done to face the well-equipped and disciplined British troops.

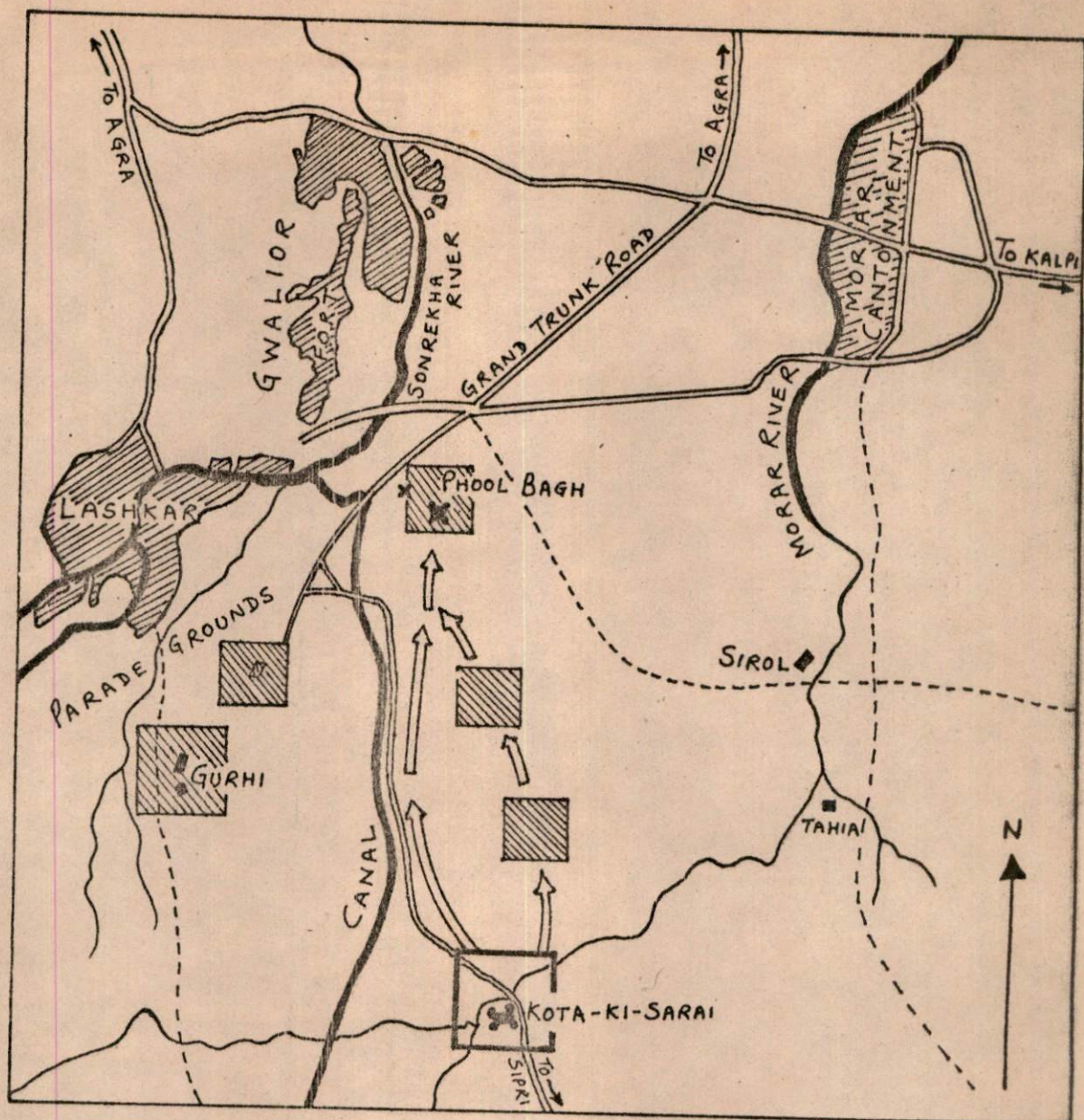
#### BATTLE OF KOTA-KI-SARAI : (June 17, 1858)

On June 16, 1858, Brig. Smith alongwith Maj. Orr of the Hyderabad Contingent proceeded to meet the Central India Field Force at Antari. Maj. Orr moved off to a position on the Sipri road, and Brig. Smith arrived at Kota-Ki-Sarai on June 17, 1858.<sup>78</sup> His forces consisted of (1) two cavalry regiments (the 8th Hussars and the 1st Bombay Lancers), (2) two infantry regiments (the 95th Foot and the 10th Bombay Native Infantry) and (3) a troop of Bombay Horse Artillery.




#### Topography and Tatya's deployment :

The terrain favoured Tatya Tope to check the British advance





# BATTLE OF KOTA-KI-SARAI JUNE 17, 1858.

DEPLOYMENT OF TATYA'S TROOPS.....   
 DEPLOYMENT OF BRITISH TROOPS.....   
 ATTACK BY BRITISH TROOPS..... 



towards Gwalior. The country between Kota-ki-Sarai and Gwalior was hilly and intersected with small ravines making it impracticable to use Cavalry.<sup>79</sup> Taty's troops were holding the ridge and the range of hillocks. North of Kota-ki-sarai, the road leading to Gwalior passed through a ford on Morar river and then ran alongside a canal through a deep defile in the hillocks for about two miles, after which it crossed the open plain at Phool Bagh. Taty's troops had ~~xxxx~~ taken up position on the hillocks east of the canal, thus commanding the road. They had also sited a battery on a ridge about 1500 yards north of kota-ki-sarai, ~~xxxx~~ thus commanding the British camp.

#### Conduct of the battle :

As soon as the British reconnoitring party came within four to five hundred ~~xxxxxx~~ yards, Taty's guns opened such a heavy fire that Brig. Smith and his forces had to retire. To remove this threat Brig. Smith decided to launch an attack immediately and sent forward the Horse Artillery supported by the cavalry towards the ridge. After a short but sharp artillery duel Taty's troops retired with their guns and took up a new position about 1000 yards in its rear, where they made a bold stand. Now the 95th Foot advanced in skirmishing order to clear this new position as well as the surrounding hillocks, which commanded the road. At the same time Smith pushed his cavalry and guns through the defile, but was encountered by stiff resistance and threatening movements.

At most vital force behind the revolutionist's troops was the Rani of Jhansi. She encouraged the sepoys and took upon herself the task of defending the eastern gate of Gwalior. She fought so well that on June 17, 1858, she forced Brig. Smith's forces ~~to~~ to retire.



Next day, Smith received reinforcements from Wrens, Ricks and Hennage. Pressing forward inch by inch in face<sup>e</sup> of heavy fire, the British troops crossed through the pass. On reaching the summit, Smith made a frontal attack by his 8th Hussars, which the Rani<sup>ie</sup> faced with supreme courage. But the charge was so fierce<sup>ie</sup> that the Rani's troops could not withstand it. When many of her men were cut to ~~xx~~ pieces, she had to retreat. The superiority of the British in arms and ammunition, in number and organization, turned the scales in their favour. During the struggle for life and death the Rani of Jhansi was killed fighting bravely for her country's freedom.<sup>80</sup> Her new horse refused to jump over the brook when she received a shot in her side and then a sabre cut on the head by a Hussar.

Next day, on June 19, 1858, Sir Hugh Rose arrived at Kota-kisari to join Smith, leaving a small force under Brig-Gen. Napier at Morar. He estimated Tatya's troops to be about 10,000 men with cavalry and two 18-pounder guns manoeuvring for position under pressure from Brig. Smit<sup>h</sup>'s position. Sir Hugh Rose ordered Brig. Stuart, with the 86th and the 25th Bombay Native Infantry, to cross the canal and attack Tatya's left flank, while the 95th Regiment, under Col. Raines, would create<sup>o</sup> diversion by ~~crossing~~ crossing the canal and attacking a hillock on which Tatya's battery was placed.<sup>81</sup>

The 86th successfully hit Tatya's left and took the guns threatening the defile. Then they pushed on towards the town. Col. Raines successfully cleared the heights occupied by Tatya's artillery. Within a short time, the British got the possession of the highest range of heights on the south, which commanded the Gwalior town. At their right were Phool Bagh<sup>a</sup> and the fort, while Lashkar was on their left. Tatya's troops were holding positions extending from Phool Bagh to Lashkar, but he observed that it would be difficult to defend Gwalior as the British troops occupying the heights were commanding the plain. Therefore, his troops<sup>pu</sup> pulled out of Gwalior. The rear-guards however,



offered resistance to enable the main body to pull out from their positions. Thus Gwalior was captured by the British troops on June 19, 1858, which enabled them to capture the fort on the next day.

#### Tatya Tope's defeat at Jora Alipur :

While Sir Hugh Rose was occupying Gwalior, ~~Major~~ Gen. Napier, who was left behind at Morar in order to cut-off the revolutionist's retreat with his troops on June 20, moved to pursue Tatya Tope's troops. On June 21, 1858, Napier overtook Tatya Tope at Jora Alipur - thirty two miles off Gwalior. After a brief resistance, revolutionist's troops broke-up and precipitately fled in all directions, and left behind them 300 or 400 dead, 25 guns, all their ammunition, elephants, tents, carts and their baggage.<sup>82</sup>

#### Deductions :

The above descriptions indicates that the capture of Gwalior was Tatya Tope's daring counter stroke which created a sensation in the British Camp. Tatya immediately started reorganizing his forces and posting detachments to guard the different approaches to Gwalior.<sup>83</sup> If Rao Saheb had not wasted his valuable time in amusements and celebrations, revolutionists would not have lost the battle.

Sir Hugh Rose was a clever strategist, therefore, he planned to encircle Gwalior and to attack its weakest point. He chose the eastern zone of Gwalior having rows of high hills for his attack, because if once the highest of the hills<sup>ocks</sup> were captured, attack could be launched along the slope till the company's troops would march into Lashkar. Though Tatya Tope had planned and organized this battle remarkably and deployed Rani of Jhansi - the bravest military leader, at the eastern gate of Gwalior, but her death greatly disheartened Tatya's troops who were holding positions extending from Phool Bagh to Lashkar.



Regardless of their superiority in arms, ammunition and number, British forces had kept Maharaja Sindhia with them in the front. When the Gwalior troops under the command of Tatya saw their Maharaja, they refused to fire against him. Therefore, the British forces easily occupied the front of Morar.

With the capture of Gwalior and subsequent defeat of Tatya Tope at Jora Alipur by the British, the Campaign in Central-India came to an end, and Tatya resorted to Guerilla activities.

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## CHAPTER VI

### GREAT GUERILLA

Guerilla warfare is a type of warfare characterized by irregular forces fighting small scale - limited actions, generally in conjunction with a larger political-military strategy, against orthodox military forces.<sup>1</sup> In this warfare the strategically weaker side assumes the tactical offensive in selected forms, times and places. It is the weapon of the weak, and is never chosen in preference to regular warfare. It is employed only when and where the possibilities of regular warfare have been closed.

#### The strategy of <sup>G</sup>guerilla warfare :

*The broad*

Strategy underlying guerilla warfare is that of protracted harassment accomplished by extremely subtle, flexible tactics designed to wear down the enemy, while gaining time either to develop sufficient military strength to defeat him in orthodox battle or to subject him to internal and external political <sup>military</sup> and pressures sufficient to cause him to seek peace.<sup>2</sup> Essentially a strategy for the morally strong and materially weak, it apparently was practiced<sup>cl</sup> in antiquity as may be inferred from the warning of the wily Chinese general Sun Tzu (Fourth Century B.C.). "There has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited".<sup>3</sup> Presumably to avoid such a war Sun Tzu instructed his generals. "Know the enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered. Know the ground, know the weather; your victory will then be total".<sup>4</sup> It is the key-note to modern guerilla commanders. A successful general avoids strength and strikes weakness. The use of tactics based on deception and surprise is the hallmark of the guerilla strategem.



## INDIAN TRADITIONS IN GUERILLA WARFARE

What we now call guerilla warfare is as old as mankind. "Ancient and medieval chronicles offer countless examples of guerilla actions" and describe "numerous campaigns undertaken by marauding tribes which practised an offensive style of warfare often marked with definite guerilla overtones".<sup>5</sup> Ancient Indian literature is the treasure house of all branches of human knowledge and more specifically the statecraft which includes the art of warfare too. Ancient Indians worshiped liberty which in national terms is known as independence. The great ancient Indian philosophers particularly Shukracharya<sup>6</sup> has exhorted the king and the people alike not to surrender before the invader. He prefers the difficult jungle-life than the luxurious life of a slave. Shukracharya seems to have been guided, in this regard, what we find in Samveda.<sup>7</sup> Samveda exhorts that when a nation (King and his army) faces a strong enemy, who cannot be defeated in the pitched battle, then instead of negotiating a peace settlement with the invader to subjugate his national freedom and sovereignty, he along with his devoted and loyal band of a few determined nationalists should move to difficult hideouts - thick jungles or tricky terrained hills/hillocks, regroup his men and material and continue to harass the invader at unscheduled places and at unimaginable timings, with a view to weaken his enemy's strength and demoralize his troops.

The Samvedic traditions of guerilla warfare were practiced during the Epic period and we find numerous examples to establish this in great epics, widely known as Valmiki Ramayan and Mahabharat. When Alexander the great invaded India, he had a tough time to conquer the small principalities who, instead of welcoming the great warrior, opted for laying their lives<sup>v</sup> to protect the best traditions of Indian nationalism. After



the battle of Hydaspes (326 B.C.) Alexander thought of easy victory over the rest of India, but his hopes were dashed to dust when he had to fight with the women forces of King Ashwak's mother who, after the death of her son, did not negotiate a peace settlement with Alexander.<sup>8</sup> Dr. A.S. *have* Altekar<sup>9</sup> has quoted L. Renu to ~~written~~ <sup>write</sup> that the women flocks of kath clan harassed Alexander's troops to the extent that they arose in revolt to demand their return to their homeland.

Ancient Indian traditions in guerilla warfare were gloriously practiced by the great warrior Rana Pratap Singh of Udaipur against the mighty emperor, described by the historians as Akber the great. An outstanding name <sup>which enshines</sup> ~~who meteor~~ India as the birthplace of guerilla warfare is Shivaji. His military genius was based on his capacity to operate successfully with insignificant troops at his disposal against the mighty forces of the then Indian Emperor and also against foreign invaders, and thus he was a constant terror to both of them, which earned him the title of hill rat from Aurangzeb<sup>6</sup>, though we consider him as a hill cat with lion's heart. Shivaji always insisted 'fare hard and journey fast'. He was monarch ~~at~~ of Giri Durgs (Hill Forts) and his tactics was based on 'hit and run raid'. He moved without provisions and obtained them by cutting enemy's tails.<sup>10</sup> These Indian traditions of guerilla warfare were once again practiced by Tatya Tope in the First war of Indian Independence.

#### TATYA TURNS AS A GUERILLA - HOW AND WHY ?

By the end of June 1858, the war had, practically, been won by the British. One after another the nationalist strongholds - Kanpur, Delhi, Lucknow, Jhansi, Kalpi, Bareilly and Gwalior had fallen. Yet, when all hopes of success had vanished, the war was prolonged for more than a year by the remarkable skill of Tatya Tope, who organised and conducted guerilla warfare against the enemy.



From the loss of Gwalior and his defeat at Jora Alipur on June 21, 1858 upto his final capture on April 7, 1859, Tatya Tope fought a marathon battle against several pursuing columns of the enemy, which established his reputation as one of the greatest guerilla leaders of the world. Tatya Tope had realized that his success depends on the popular support, therefore, he used cooperation of the people, sent advance parties into villages to announce, either by beating of drums or by pasting posters etc., in the name of Rao Saheb, that they were fighting the British (Ferangis) and not the people, therefore, they need not abscond on their arrival for fear of molestation or plunder. Everything that their army needed would be purchased even at higher rates, but if refused would be forcibly taken.<sup>11</sup>

Tatya's next problem was to raise an army. He turned his attention to the troops in the Indian states. He still had faith in their loyalty for the cause. He was confident that he <sup>w</sup>ould be able to build up forces in considerable strength. He succeeded in his mission. He not only received full support from the tribals but also from local inhabitants.

The turn of circumstances forced Tatya to change his military strategy. He opted for hit and run strategy, <sup>aglm</sup> which dictated not to fight pitched battle but to engage the enemy in guerilla warfare. For this he had the requisite knowledge of the territory in which he operated. He now moved in small groups, which facilitated their escape if attacked. Thus Tatya's future operations were based on the following principles :

- (a) Not to involve themselves in any pitched battle with the enemy.
- (b) To adopt Guerilla tactics, which caused much harassment to the enemy.



- (c) *To carry on* the struggle, the needed provisions, ~~arms~~ etc. were to be acquired through levy on the Indian states.

### British Encirclement :

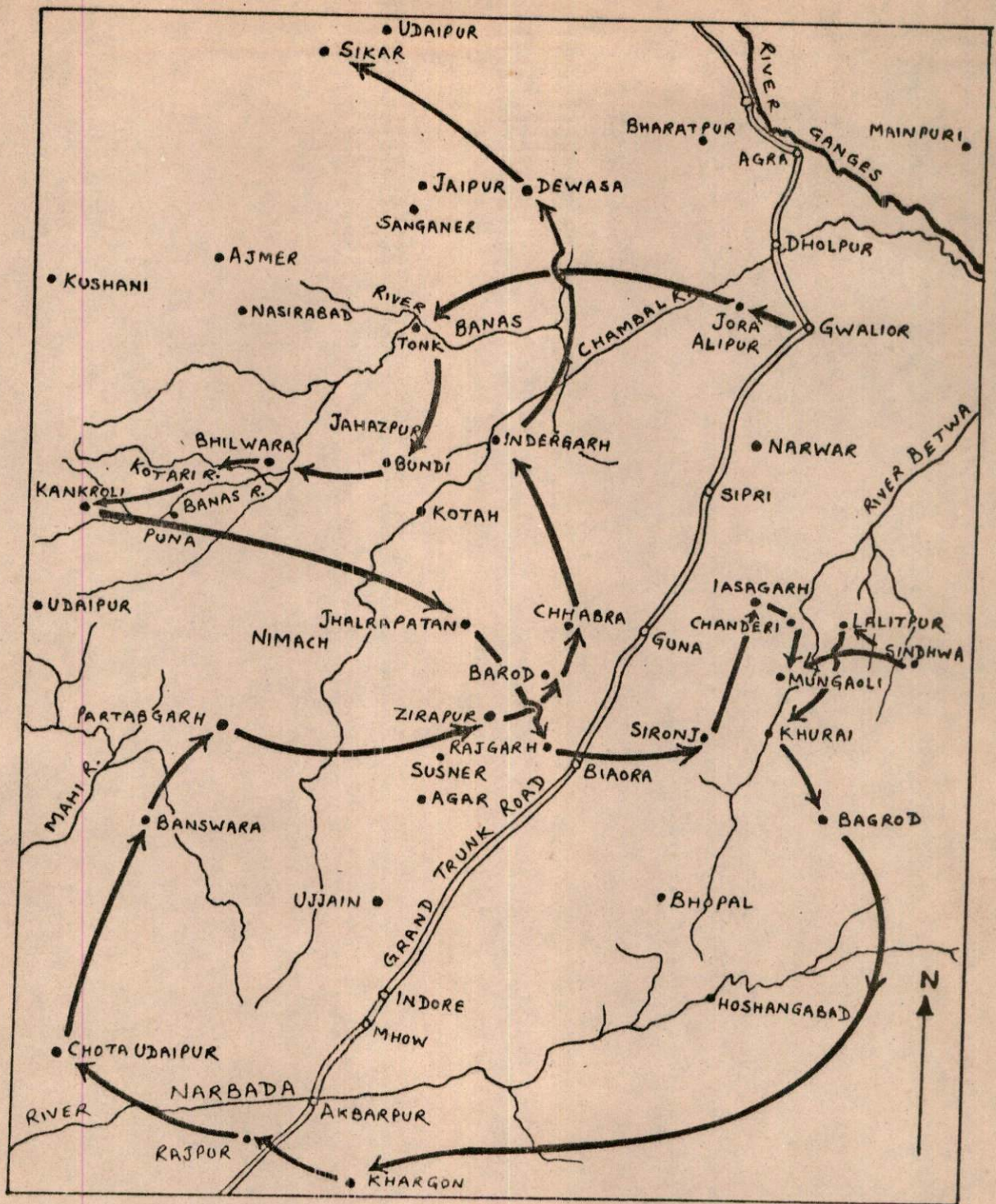
After the capture of Gwalior, Sir Hugh Rose left for Bombay to assume the command of the Poona Division. In place of 'Central India Field Force' a 'Gwalior Division' was formed in which garrisons of Jhansi and Kalpi were included. Brig. Gen. R. Napier assumed the command of the Gwalior Division, and its forces were stationed mainly at Gwalior, Jhansi, Sipri and Guna. A brigade of the Rajputana field Force with Headquarters at Masirabad was under Maj. Gen. H.G. Roberts, another brigade was at Nimach under Brig. W. Perke. One brigade was at Sipri under Brig. M.W. Smith, yet another brigade of the Bengal Army under Brig. St. G.D. Showers was at Agra. The Malwa Division of the Bombay Army was under Maj. Gen. J. Michel with H.Q. at Mhow. These half a dozen formations formed the inner ring, which were supported by other forces who formed the outer ring of the girdle. These forces moved like a closing net to capture Tatya Tope but he outwitted and outmanoeuvred them all for more than nine months. He had an extraordinary vitality that "no one ever saw him in the distance until Man Singh betrayed him..."<sup>12</sup>

### GUERRILLA ENGAGEMENTS

#### 1. Tatya towards Jaipur and his attack on Tonk :

After his defeat at Jora Alipur, Tatya Tope along with his forces, accompanied by Rao Saheb and the Nawab of Banda moved towards Bharatpur, but a force sent from Agra by Brig. Showers to cover Bharatpur forced him to move towards Jaipur, but he was forestalled by Maj. Gen. Roberts, who along with a large force had reached Jaipur before him, therefore, Tatya Tope turned south-





TATYA TOPE'S GUERILLA ENGAGEMENTS  
FROM JUNE 21, 1859. ONWARDS



wards and attacked Tonk, where fortune favoured him. The terrified Nawab of Tonk shut himself up in his fort and left outside his troops to face Tatya. These troops en-masse along with three brass guns joined Tatya and thus on July 9, 1858, Tatya gained complete control over <sup>T</sup>onk.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Tatya towards Udaipur :

Reinforced Tatya moved towards Bundi and reached there on July 18,<sup>14</sup> but the Maharao of the state refused to give them supplies and did not permit Tatya to enter his walled city, therefore, Tatya, in revenge, plundered Chynae,<sup>15</sup> a rich village west of Bundi. Thereafter with a view to proceed to Udaipur he crossed Bundi hills through the Keena Pass. Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Roberts had sent a flying column under Lieut. Col. Holmes to keep up the pursuit. He abandoned the direct line of pursuit and crossed the Bundi range by the Bundi Pass and reached Jahazpur on August 4, 1858.<sup>16</sup> But before Holme's flying columns could intercept him, Tatya had reached Bhilwara. Meanwhile Roberts, who had marched westward to the Nimach - Nasirabad road, advanced towards Bhilwara, and after a skirmish on August 8, drove Tatya Tops towards the river Banas. Holmes now <sup>a</sup>come up with his force and joined the mainbody of the troops led by Maj. Gen. Roberts. Roberts now took up the pursuit and reached Kankroli on August 13, 1858, ~~wh~~ where he got the information that Tatya Tops's force has taken <sup>e</sup>defensive position near Nathdwara, on a rocky ridge on the right bank of the river Banas.

Tatya Tops's position was naturally strong. The river ran at the foot of the ridge in front of him, and also protected his right with a bend. To his left lay the steep hills. The British troops had to approach this position across a flat plain offering no cover, which



was swept by Tatya Tope's guns. When Roberts arrived on August 14, 1858, Tatya's guns opened up, but despite casualties his infantry forded the river and scaled the hill, while the cavalry attacked the centre. The charge broke Tatya Tope's line. He suffered a reverse and sustained some losses but majority of his nimble-footed troops escaped across the undulating country.

3. Tatya towards Jhalrapatan and Indore :

Tatya Tope fled eastwards in order to cross the river Chambal. He was followed by Roberts who met Brig. Parke, commanding the Nimach Brigade, on August 18, 1858, at Puna. General Roberts handed over the pursuit to Parke. Tatya Tope, however, proved too clever for Parke. Parke made enormous efforts to confirm which way Tatya has gone along with his force? But he got contradictory informations from local people. He was told that <sup>a</sup>Tatya would not be able to cross the Chambal as it was swollen by the rains. In the meantime he received the information that Tatya was crossing the river Chambal. Parke arrived too late and saw that Tatya's forces had crossed the river, but the swollen Chambal prevented Parke; therefore, he returned to Nimach.

After crossing the river on August 27, 1858 Tatya Tope appeared at the town of Jhalrapatan, the capital of the Jhalwar state. He tried to winover the army of Jhalwar. The chief of Jhalrapatan<sup>n</sup> was forced to pay a heavy ransom, before he was able to contrive his escape. Tatya also obtained about thirty cannons with other munitions of war.<sup>17</sup> This, indeed, was a great success and due to swollen Chambal, Tatya Tope felt assured that for sometime British troops would not be able to disturb him. Therefore, during five days of his stay in the town, he planned his future course of actions. He decided to make a dash to Indore and rally its people to his side and then cross into the Decan<sup>c</sup> to proclaim <sup>Nana</sup>Nana as the Peshwa.



On September 1, 1858, Tatya Tope, along with a large army, advanced towards Indore. He had broken through the circle which was tightening round him. It was an impossible task but he accomplished it by putting the enemy on a false scent. "It is impossible to withhold admiration from the pertinacity with which the scheme was carried out", writes Malleon.<sup>18</sup> But his move was foreseen by Maj. Gen. Michel, who was commanding in Malwa, and he covered Indore by sending a small force to Ujjain under Col. Lockhart, while he himself went on Tatya's track. Col. Lockhart moved southwards to Susner and awaited there for a reinforcement from Mhow under Col. Hope, because he was not strong enough to attack Tatya. The forces of Col. Hope and Lockhart joined at Nalkhera<sup>a</sup>, about ten miles south-east of Susner. On September 13, 1858, Maj. Gen. Michel arrived at Nalkhera and assumed the command of the operational force.<sup>19</sup> Michel pushed on until he closed up with Tatya's force encamped near the walled town of Rajgarh. As his troops were extremely tired and night was approaching, he postponed the attack till next morning. But early in the morning he discovered that Tatya's troops had disappeared during the night. On the track marks of Tatya's fleeing elephants and artillery carriers, Michel chased Tatya's fleeing forces and finally reached at Baira on September 15, 1858, where Tatya's forces had taken defence. A British Cavalry patrol, which moved forward to reconnoitre the position, was chased by a swarm of horsemen, therefore, British infantry and artillery moved forward in support of the cavalry. After a brief artillery duel, the British infantry led the attack. Tatya Tope's troops gave way and fled abandoning 25 guns.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Period of uncertainty :

Thus Tatya Tope's plan to occupy Indore failed. He fled



eastwards to the valley of Betwa and reached Sironj. Here he found four guns and rested for a week. This was a period of uncertainties in his activities, because, probably he had no logical and fruitful objective in his mind. The British troops were planning to close up against him. Brigadier Parke controlled approaches to Indore and Bhopal, Smith's brigade was moving down from the north and the column from Jhansi under Col. Liddell was closing in from the north-east. Michel himself continued to move in from the west. Even then they could not catch this brave and clever genius of flight.

From Sironj Tatya Tope marched northwards - attacked and captured Isagarh on October 2, 1858,<sup>21</sup> along with five more guns. After this, nationalist troops were split-up into two bodies. One body of troops under Tatya Tope marched towards the strategic fort at Chanderi, while the other body under Rao Sahab, advanced towards Lalitpur. Tatya Tope was hopeful that Sindhia's troops garrisoning Chanderi would join him. But they refused to oblige him, therefore, Tatya Tope moved twenty miles southwards to Mangaoli, where he was overtaken and defeated by Michel on October, 10, 1858. He fled across the Betwa to Lalitpur and joined Rao Sahab. But soon they found that all their routes were blocked.

5. Tatya Tope crosses Narbada :

Finding that he was being surrounded on all sides by the ~~six~~ British columns, Tatya Tope resolved to cross Narbada. He fled towards Khurai, where his rearguard was defeated by Michel on October 25, 1858. Tatya Tope, with the main body, escaped towards the Narbada and dodging the British commanders, who were at ~~their~~<sup>his</sup> heels, succeeded in crossing it on October 31, 1858. He crossed



the Narbada at Sureela Ghat,<sup>22</sup> a point about 40 miles away from Hosangabad. It was a splendid achievement which caused widespread panic. Malleson says - "Thus in the dying agony of the Mutiny was accomplished a movement which if carried out twelve months earlier... would have produced an effect fatal for British supremacy, would have roused Western <sup>n</sup> Presidency, kindled Nizam's dominions and would have penetrated to South India."<sup>23</sup>

But contrary to Tatya's expectations, the people of this country of the Bhonsalas, whose annexation a few years ago had shaken them to the core, showed a marked apathy towards Tatya. He wanted to push towards the south across the river Tapti and enter the Maratha region, but he found his enemy on the alert. It was a tentelizing experience for Tatya and Rao Sahab to be separated by the narrow Satpura range, beyond which lay the country of Nana's home land. Foiled in his attempt, Tatya then pushed on to Khargon, a decayed town in Nimer, where a detachment of Holkar's mutinous troops (two troops of cavalry, a company of infantry along with two guns) joined him on November 19, 1858.<sup>24</sup>

6. Tatya's bold bid to <sup>ei</sup>sieze Baroda :

Thus reinforced, Tatya pushed north-west, crossing the great Bombay-Agra highway and looting the carts carrying the British supplies and snapping telegraph wires. His aim was to strike at Baroda,<sup>25</sup> another state with a Maratha dynasty and court largely sympathetic to the Peshwa. Baroda was garrisoned by only one company of Europeans and <sup>wo</sup>two native regiments, besides the troops of the Gaekwar. Tatya Tope was quite hopeful of winning over to his side the native regiments, and the Gaekwar's troops.



Meanwhile detachments were sent out from Mhow to watch the fords over the Narbada. One of these detachments under Maj. Sutherland crossed the Narbada at Akbarpur and overtook Tatya Tope at Rajpur on November 25, 1858.<sup>26</sup> In this skirmish Tatya Tope lost two guns, but escaped swiftly with his force and completely outwitted Sutherland. When the latter, following on his tracks, arrived next evening on the bank of Narbada, he found that Tatya Tope's troops were encamped on the opposite side. Sutherland did not dare to cross the river in the face of Tatya and was content to halt south of the Narbada.

Having cleverly crossed the Narbada on November 26, 1858, Tatya Tope made a dash towards Baroda. It was his last chance. During this hot pursuit "his men were able to display the capacity for rapid marching in which natives of India are unsurpassed," writes Malleson, "I might say unequalled by any troops in the world".<sup>27</sup> But his pursuers were too many. The city was only 50 miles away, When he was intercepted and defeated by Brig. Parke near Chota Udaipur on December 1, 1858.<sup>28</sup> Thus Tatya's last chance slipped through his fingers.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- <sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1002.
- <sup>3</sup> Sun Tzu. : The Art of War, translated by Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford 1976), p. 73.



- 4 ibid., p. 129.
- 5 Encyclopaedia Britannica (1969), Vol. X, p. 1000.
- 6 Shukreniti, 3/113.
- 7 Samveda, 9/3.
- 8 Sharma, op. cit., p. 115.
- 9 Altekar, Dr. A.S. : Education in Ancient India, pp. 221-23.
- 10 Sharma, Dr. Y.K. : Maratha History Seminar Papers, (1971), University of Bombay.
- 11 "While passing through Jaipur Tatya's men got their provisions from villagers. Their practice was to send parties in advance explaining that they had no desire to injure the villages or their inhabitants - they ~~xxxx~~ required supplies for which they paid twice the value and if refused, ~~xxxx~~ would threaten to take what they required by force, as in some instances they did". Eden, Political Agent, Jaipur to A.G.G., July 24, 1858.
- 12 Sylvester, op. cit., p. 199.
- 13 Telegraphic Message from Mr. E.A. Reade, Agra dated July 13, 1858. (Copies of Telegrams sent by Mr. E.A. Reade from May 11, 1858 to January 12, 1859) Sec retariat Records Room, Lucknow.
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## CHAPTER VII

### LAST DAYS

When nationalist plan of winning over Baroda to their side was shattered, Tatya Tope and Rao Saheb took shelter in the forests of Banswara, the southern most extremity of Rajasthan. They felt extremely desperate because, taking advantage of the Queen's proclamation, Tatya's ally, the the Nawab of Banda in November, 1858,<sup>1</sup> had surrendered to the British. Hence Tatya and Rao Saheb were left alone to carry on the struggle.

### TATYA'S HASTY OPERATIONS

The cordon around Tatya Tope and Rao Saheb was well drawn, and they were hemmed in from all the sides. Roberts was protecting the west side of the forest, while Colonel Somerset was sent from Mhow to guard the east and the south-east. A force under Major Roche from Nimach protected the north and north-west. On the south, the Nerbada was already closed to them. But Tatya did not give up his morale, he broke the cordon and entered Mewar for the second time with a view to exploit the differences between its ruler and one of his chiefs, Kesari Singh, who helped them with provisions. On December 25, 1858, as he neared Partabgarh,<sup>2</sup> he encountered a column under Major Roche. After a minor skirmish Tatya Tope escaped to Zirapur, where on December, 29, 1858, he was again dislodged by a column from Mhow under Lt. Col. Benson.<sup>3</sup> Now Tatya Tope marched to Chhabra, where he was overtaken on December 31, 1858 by another Mhow



column under Brigadier Somerset.<sup>4</sup> An ineffective skirmish ensued and Tatya Tope escaped to Nahargarh, where he was joined by Man Singh. When they reached the Chambal, Man Singh left Tatya Tope and Rao Saheb. They however pushed on to Indergarh, where they were joined by Prince Feroze Shah on January 13, 1859.<sup>5</sup>

But reinforcements from the two princes did not alter Tatya's position much. Throughout his pursuit, his followers had kept on deserting him in such a large numbers that by now his army, combined with the troops of the two princes hardly numbered 2000. The enemy had tightened its net on Indergarh and there was no way to escape. They were almost checkmated by Napier on the north and north-east, Brigadier Showers was on the north-west, Brigadier Somerset was at Baroda on the east and Brigadier Smith was on the south-east, Major General Michel was on the south while Brigadier Monner, commanding the Nasirabad Brigade, was on the south-west and west.

But Tatya effected on all these "British generals a jogtrot."<sup>6</sup> He resolved to make a second dash for Jaipur. Accompanied by Rao Saheb and Prince Feroze Shah, he reached Dewasa, a town about 35 miles east of Jaipur, on January 13, 1859. But quite unexpectedly Brigadier Showers fell on him on January 14, 1859 and intercepted his march to Jaipur. The Brigadier killed a large portion of Tatya's army but could not catch him. Tatya along with Feroze Shah escaped to Sikar, the capital of a small Rajput chief. But Lt. Col. Holmes tracked and attacked them on January 21, 1859.<sup>7</sup> The battle of Sikar was Tatya's last encounter with the British troops, in which his force was again routed.

#### Tatya into the Jungles of Paron :

After their rout of Sikar, Tatya's army began to melt away. Many petty chiefs, taking advantage of the Queen's proclamation,



also deserted him because they thought that now the struggle was hopeless and they would not be able to elude the enemy for long. Thus Tatya calculated that their (Tatya's and Rao Saheb's) safety now lay in moving separately in small groups, to enable them to play hide and seek with the enemy in the thick forests and vales that surrounded them. Tatya Tope, therefore, decided that he should now part company with Rao Saheb and Feroze Shah. With two cooks, an attendant, three horses and a pony, Tatya Tope took leave of Rao Saheb, his master and Comrade-in-arms. While Tatya wended his lonely way into the Jungles of Paron where Man Singh was hiding.<sup>8</sup>

The two princes - Rao Saheb and Feroze Shah, parrying all assaults of the enemy, took shelter in the Jungles of Sironj. But even then they were not left in peace. "With their superior resources the British Generals tried to cordon the jungle and search it foot by foot and inch by inch".<sup>9</sup>

#### THE MISFORTUNE - MAN SINGH'S BETRAYAL

Till the beginning of April 1859, Tatya Tope was still at large. He had defied all attempts of the enemy to put a noose round his neck. Major Meade was asked by General Napier to clear Paron jungles and have an eye on the road through it.<sup>10</sup> But when military tactics failed, the British took recourse to trachery.

Man Singh had no stamina and toughness to match with Maratha generals. A year's rough <sup>a</sup>campaigning and guerilla activity had worn him out, therefore, the British decided to negotiate with Man Singh for his <sup>e</sup>surrender, and soon he started settling terms with them. In the meantime, Meade managed to capture <sup>a</sup>queens of Man Singh and other members of his family and took them to his <sup>a</sup>camp as hostages. Driven to desperation, Man Singh entered Meade's camp and formally surrendered to him<sup>n</sup> on April 2, 1859. But his surrender did not bring with it a promise



from his new friends that his Jagir would be restored to him, the loss of which had turned him into a rebel. He sensed that the British wanted something more than surrender from him in return, and he was not unwilling to give it. Major Meade writes, "From hints dropped by Maun Sing at various times since his surrender, I was satisfied that he had it in his power<sup>e</sup> to enable us to surprise Tantia Topse, and I have done all... to urge him to establish by so signal an act of service, his claim<sup>12</sup> to the consideration of Government".<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, he held Man Singh's family as hostages. After much persuasion and anxious discussion with Major Meade, on April 7, 1859, Man Singh agreed to betray Tatya and promised to put him in Meade's hands.

#### Tatya Topse's capture :

To capture this great guerilla was not a joke and it was as difficult as to stalk a red deer. He had his spies<sup>e</sup> everywhere. Man Singh feared that Tatya would not be caught if he senses his duplicity. Man Singh, therefore, arranged an interview with Tatya on false pretext.<sup>14</sup> Meade was anxious to participate in this enterprise but Man Singh dissuaded<sup>s</sup> him and his troops from involvement, and desired that the arrangements should be left entirely in his hands. He stationed a small party of native troops near a hollow in which he and Tatya Topse had been meeting frequently, for ambushing the great guerilla leader. He led his "victim" there and held a long conversation with him, till after midnight, when Tantia Topse fell asleep. The Sipahies were then fetched by Maun Sing, and Tantia Topse was secured and pinioned, his arms being seized by Maun Sing himself".<sup>15</sup> Thus as a result of Man Singh's betrayal, Tatya Topse was captured on April 7, 1859, along with a horse, a sword, a kukri, three Gold Armlets and 118 Gold Mehars.<sup>16</sup> His two cooks escaped in the melee. On the next morning Tatya Topse was brought to Meade's camp, from where he was taken to Sipri.<sup>17</sup>



### THE SENTENCE - ANALYSED

On April 15, 1859, Tatya Tope was tried by a Court-martial at Sipri.<sup>18</sup> The Court-martial was constituted by the order of Major Meade, commanding at Sipri. It consisted of all Europeans :

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Capt. Baugh...        | President                 |
| 2. Capt. Pierce          | Member                    |
| 3. Lieut. Orchard...     | Member                    |
| 4. Capt. Webster...      | Member                    |
| 5. Lieut. de Celto...    | Member                    |
| 6. Capt. I.S.P. Field... | Judge Advocate General.   |
| 7. Lieut. Gibbon...      | Interpreter to the Court. |

#### The trial of Tatya Tope :

Tatya Tope was charged under Act XIV of 1857, "with having ~~was~~ been in rebellion and having waged war against the British Government between June 1857 and December 1858<sup>19</sup> (specially at Jhansi and Gwalior). But no accusation of murder was framed against him.

During the proceedings, eight prosecution witnesses were produced. Tatya Tope had no counsel to defend him. At the close of the examination of each prosecution witness, Tatya was asked whether he wanted to put any questions to the witness by way of cross-examination. He declined to do so except in two cases. In his defence he pleaded :

I only obeyed, in all things that I did, my master's orders, the Nana's orders, upto the capture of Kalpi, and afterwards those of Rao Saheb. I have nothing to state, except that I have had nothing to do with the murder of any European men, women, or children, neither had I at anytime<sup>20</sup> given orders for anyone to be hanged.

Thus he bravely admitted that he had fought against the Britishers but with fair weapons. This straight-forward ~~defence~~



defence, the national duty of each and every patriot, fell on deaf ears and the court-martial pronounced the immoral and illegal verdict which was a foregone conclusion.<sup>21</sup> The proceedings had started in the morning of April 15, 1859 and in a hurried judgement pronounced the same evening the Court found him "guilty of the heinous offence charged" and was sentenced to death.

#### Execution of Tatyasaheb Tope :

Immediately <sup>after</sup> on the pronouncement of the sentence Tatyasaheb Tope was carried away from <sup>to</sup> the fort of Sipri, where he remained for three days. It is recorded that during these days he remained fearless and waited impatiently for death. He expressed no wish to see any member of his family.

Tatyasaheb Tope was hanged on April 18, 1859<sup>22</sup> at about 5 p.m.; On the parade grounds near the fort of Sipri, in a square formed by the troops of the garrison, amidst thousands of spectators silently and tearfully watching his execution. No sooner were the irons removed from his hands, "he ascended the gallows with a firm step and placed his neck in the noose with the greatest sang-froid".<sup>23</sup>

The body was kept hanging for public exhibition for four hours, perhaps to strike terror in the hearts of the nationalists who dared to oppose the British might. No sooner the guards were withdrawn, many admirers, both Indian as well as Europeans flocked to get the last glimpse of this great martyr.

#### Was the sentence justified?

Serious doubts were expressed about the legality and justice of Tatyasaheb Tope's execution. Not being in the service of the Company's army, he could not be treated as a "mutineer". The propriety of the sentence has been questioned, for the majority of the population regard the rising of 1857 as a national contest and not a rebellion.<sup>24</sup>



Col. G.B. Malleson has also expressed himself against the validity of the sentence. He writes :

Public opinion at the time ratified the justice of the sentence, but it may, I think, be doubted whether posteriority will confirm that verdict. Tatya Tope was not a born servant of the British rule. At the time of his birth i.e. about 1812, his master was the independent ruler of a large portion of Western India. He was under no obligation to serve faithfully and truly the race which had robbed his master... He declared that he had committed no murder. He was not charged with committing any. He, a retainer of the ex-Peshwa's family, was charged with fighting with the England and on that charge alone he was convicted and hanged. Surely under the circumstances of the case, the punishment was greater than the offence.<sup>25</sup>

#### WAS TATYA REALLY HANGED ?

There are some historians who believe that it was not Tatya Tope who was hanged, but another man impersonating Tatya, and they had produced certain analysed evidence to support their contention. The prominent historians of this class includes Sri T.K. Tope<sup>26</sup> and Sri Shrinivas Balaji Hardiker.<sup>27</sup> The description of circumstances in which Tatya Tope was captured, tried and hanged contain following doubtful elements :

1. The general belief that Tatya Tope was betrayed by Man Singh is not free from suspicion. Man Singh insisted that "arrangements for the capture (of Tatya Tope) should be left in his hands",<sup>28</sup> not only this, writes Major Meade that he assured him that "there would probably be little or no resistance".<sup>29</sup> Tatya Tope's entire career shows that he was not the one to accept defeat. Tatya's reported indifference to his arrest, therefore, sounds inconsistent with his character. Tatya's two cooks are said to have escaped in the melee. If the cooks could run away, surely a



guerilla leader who was described by his enemy as 'genius of flight' could have easily dodged a handful of sepoy who captured him.

Hardikar <sup>l</sup>believes<sup>30</sup> that Man Singh was in league with Tatya and substituted some one else in his place. He may have played this ruse on the British in order to get the release of his queens and other family members, who were in Meade's custody as hostages.

2. Surviving relatives of Tatya Tope at Bithur believe that Tatya was not executed at Sipri (Shivpuri) on April 18, 1859. According to Tatya's nephew Sri Narain Lakshman Tope,<sup>31</sup> Tatya often visited his parents at Bithur between 1859 and 1862 in disguise and rendered them monetary help.
3. Sen's book 'Eighteen Fifty Seven' includes a sketch of Tatya Tope said to be drawn by Lt. Baugh<sup>32</sup> in Major Meade's army. This sketch does not at all resemble with other well-known photographs of Tatya Tope. It may also be seen that the sketch also does not tally with the descriptions made by J. Lang<sup>33</sup>, who had seen Tatya Tope at Bithur.
4. The procedure which had been adopted in the trial of Tatya Tope was really suspicious and extra-ordinary. All the leaders of the revolution, who could be arrested, were tried at places to which they belonged. Therefore, as per practice Tatya Tope's trial should have taken place at Kanpur, the district of his residence. Khan Bahadur Khan, the revolutionist of Bareilly was arrested in Nepal, but was tried at Bareilly.<sup>34</sup> Rao Sahab was apprehended in Chenani (Jammu) but was tried and hanged at Kanpur.<sup>35</sup> Also several other persons who had been arrested in the suspicion<sup>n</sup> of being Nana Sahab, were brought to Kanpur for identification. Thus how can we believe that Tatya



Tope who was arrested in the jungles of Paron could have been tried at Sipri without being brought to Kanpur for proper identification.

5. All the nationalist leaders were prosecuted in the ordinary Criminal Courts or by special commissions. Contrary to this, Tatya Tope was Court-martialled. There was no need to make an exception in this case, except that the British authorities feared that certain things would be exposed, which they wished to hide from the public.
6. Tatya Tope was hanged after a hurried trial. This undue procedural haste creates much suspicion. This suspicion is further strengthened by the fact that none of the pursuing generals had seen Tatya.<sup>36</sup> Thus anyone could have been passed on to the British as Tatya.
7. The British Government did not restore Man Singh's Jagir to him as promised. If the person to whom, Man Singh got arrested was really Tatya Tope, then the Britishers would have certainly restored his Jagir, as was done in cases of many other persons who had come to British camp after deserting the nationalist revolutionaries. It indicates that British were not sure about the identity of the man hanged hurriedly as Tatya.
8. In 1862 Ram Krishna Tope, a cousin of Tatya reached Baroda in search of employment and met the Maharaja there. The Maharaja, apprehending trouble with the British Government, put him before the Assistant Resident, who took a written statement from him, which contains the following colloquy :

Assistant Resident : "Where is Tatya Tope now?"

Ram Krishna Tope : "I don't know where he is. Since he left us we have not met nor have I heard of his whereabouts."<sup>37</sup>



One may ask why this question was asked when Tatya Tope had been hanged in 1859. This query about Tatya's whereabouts appears to be rather intriguing and points that Britishers themselves were not sure, whether they had arrested and hanged the real Tatya Tope.

In view of the above observations, it may be concluded that, Tatya Tope's capture and execution by the British cannot be accepted as <sup>an</sup> unquestionable truth.

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- 14 Sen, loc. cit.
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- 17 idem
- 18 Shivpuri is the traditional name of the place.
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- 21 Sen, op. cit., p. 378.
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- 27 An eminent historian of Kanpur.
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- 29 idem



- 30 Hardikar, op. cit., pp. 213-14.
- 31 ibid., pp. 198-99.
- 32 Sen, op. cit., p. 137.
- 33 Refer to Making of Taty, Ch. II, p. 41.
- 34 Department XXIV, File No. 1/15 : 'Case regarding Khan Bahadur Khan, late Nawab of Bareilly', Bareilly Commissioner's Office Mutiny Records. State Archives of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad.
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- 36 Refer to Sylvester's impressions, Ch. VI, p. 133.
- 37 Letter from the Assistant Resident of Baroda, dated Nov. 14, 1862, to the Secretary Political Department of the Government of Bombay. 'Source Material for History of Freedom Movement in India' (Govt. of Bombay Records), Vol. I, pp. 231-37.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

Tatya Tope was one of the greatest ~~xxx~~ military leaders, who led the first war of India's independence against the Britons. He <sup>was</sup> almost unknown till the dramatic events of 1857 catapulted him from complete obscurity into sudden prominence. When Kanpur joined the freedom struggle, Tatya rose to the position of a general in the Peshwa's army. During the warfare that followed, he shot up like a meteor and left a blazing trail behind him. His name became a proverb ~~not~~ <sup>only</sup> at home but ~~in~~ abroad too. Sir George Forrest evaluated Tatya Tope as "the ablest nationalist leader" who had "remarkable power of organization".<sup>1</sup>

His martial ardour coupled with a wonderful stamina made his enemies hold their breath. He gave the longest fight to his enemy and shook the very foundations of the mighty British Empire. "From June 20th 1858, until April 7th 1859, he led his pursuers a dance comparable to the exploits of Christian De Wet at the end of the Boer war, or Von Lettow Vorbeck in German East Africa".<sup>2</sup>

### PERSONALITY

Tatya Tope was a gifted general with admirable qualities, - sound strategy, skilful tactics, bold initiative, daring counter-strokes, with power of persuasion and gift of a organization. There must be something in his personality which drew people to him. Several native chiefs flocked around him. He found friends not only among peasants but also among the aboriginal tribes. He succeeded in winning over the troops of several native principalities. The conversion of the Gwalior



155  
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contingent and the subsequent coup there, are the best examples of his power of persuasion. He has been praised for his remarkable gift of organization which he displayed right from the first battle of Kanpur. It came into sharper focus when he built up the "Peshwa's Army". In a letter congratulating Maj. Meade on the capture of Tatya, Sir Hugh Rose expresses no doubt that "of all the rebel chiefs who acted a part in the rebellion, Tantia Topee possessed the greatest enterprise as regards initiative and the most enduring resolution of character. His talents for organization were remarkable. You have no idea how much talent he displayed in this way in the preparation of the so-called Peshwa's Army".<sup>3</sup>

Several times during his guerilla warfare, he collected armies and lost them, he collected guns and lost them, but with his characteristic resourcefulness he always made up the loss. Sylvester equates Tatya Tope with ~~Räxxk~~ Robinhood. Tatya's infantry consisted mostly of the local tribes who "were good shots and fought well... Most of them were mounted on camels and ponies, the latter often shoeless and footsore, their feet bound up with rags to protect them from rocks. They bivouacked in some deeply-wooded glens at night and cooked their meals and slept, but always placed watchful pickets and seldom could be surprised... He was beaten often and as often reported utterly routed. This was a mistake. It was their custom to separate in small bodies when attacked... it facilitated their escape, but they always had their trysting tree, and rallied in a few hours... some of our best cavalry officers were in pursuit but could not catch this genius of flight".<sup>4</sup>

#### NATIONALISM

Tatya Tope was a great national hero who laid his life at the alter<sup>a</sup> of freedom. The splendid way in which he carried on the struggle has earned him a niche in the Indian history. His greatness lies in his undying spirit, and devotion to the



national cause. He took the banner of revolt from his master and held it aloft till his last breath. He fought ~~even~~ when he knew that it was an unequal fight and struggle was hopeless. Rebel Chiefs came to him and then left him. Troops deserted him in such large numbers that several times his army was in shambles and he had to begin with a new. The reverses and defeats, though sometimes seems to have broken his heart and back-bone, but did not deter his spirit and he never felt disheartened. He refused to recognize the defeat, inspite of the fact that most of the nationalist leaders had been liquidated and he himself had practically no chance of success against the powerful enemy. But he ~~knew~~<sup>e</sup> no dismay, therefore, even in the face of most adverse conditions, he never thought of surrender. Had the British not caught him by treachery, he would have, perhaps, continued his fight for many more years - till his last breath as he did.

Thus Tatyasaheb fought a losing war, and fought it in the best traditions of his race. His contemporary journalist wrote "He fights like a maratha instead of a black European and has consequently the success which usually belongs to a national mode of warfare".<sup>5</sup> Tatyasaheb lit the flame of freedom in every patriotic heart. The succeeding generations picked up <sup>his</sup> banner and marched ahead till freedom was won. Malleson has drawn an analogy between Tatyasaheb and Hofer, the national hero of Tyrol, who was executed by Napoleon. Both the heroes represented the national struggle against foreign rule. "Both were heroes to their countrymen - the one a European, is still a hero to the world, the other a Maratha." "Who knows" asks Malleson, "that in the ~~the~~ nooks and corners of the valleys of Chambal, Narbada and Parbati, he is not mentioned with respect".<sup>6</sup>

Malleson's words ~~pro~~ proved prophetic. Not only in the valleys of Chambal, Narbada and Parbati, but throughout the length and breadth of his country, Tatyasaheb's name has been enshrined



in the hearts of his people. Tatya Tope is, in fact, one of the greatest national heroes<sup>s</sup> of India and the nation will always feel gratefully proud of him.

#### LEADERSHIP

"It is the combination of wise theory with great character which will make the great Captain" (Jomini in Precis, I 130).<sup>7</sup> Though Tatya Tope had no formal military training<sup>8</sup> during his early period of life, he gave ample proof of his military genius in the operations he undertook. He was a gifted general and possessed the gift of seizing an opportunity for launching counter attacks. Thus while Sir Colin Campbell's troops were engaged in operations at Lucknow Residency in November 1857, he launched a counter attack at Kanpur from Kalpi which led to the annihilation of British forces under Windham on November 28, 1857. While Sir Hugh Rose's troops were engaged in a grim battle of Kalpi (May 22, 1858), Tatya completed the audacious plan of seizing Gwalior, which indicates his initiative and foresight. Malleon speaks eloquently of Tatya's 'wonderful marches', 'a good eye for selecting a position', and a 'marvellous faculty for localities'. But Tatya Tope lacked one gift - the physical courage to lead men to the cannon's mouth. Instead of involving in thick fighting, he preferred, as in the battle of Betwa, to be in the second line of defence. Thus he failed to lead his troops to victory. Though he lacked physical courage, he possessed moral courage - the will to fight. He refused to be beaten and carried on the struggle to the bitter end.

It seems that Tatya lost major battles but he surpassed his adversaries in guerilla warfare. He was undoubtedly one of the most famous guerilla leaders of the world. In his marathon race that lasted for nine months, from his defeat at Jaura Alipur to his capture by Maj. Meade, he toured Rajputana and Central India many a time covering approximately 16,17,000 sq.



miles, crossed the Narbada to and fro, which is a mark in itself. He kept the area in a state of constant fervour. He sacked enemy stations, plundered treasuries, emptied arsenals, swooped on baggage-trains and post-carts. He led the generals a merry dance. The splendid marches made by the British commanders in his pursuit are the best testimony to his ability as a guerilla leader. Brig. Parke covered 240 miles in nine days, Brig. Somerset marched 230 miles in the same period, and again 70 miles in fifty-eight hours. Col. Holmes traversed 54 miles of sandy desert in less than two days, while Brig. Honner marched 145 miles in only four days.<sup>9</sup> Yet Tatya always outwitted and outmanoeuvred them. He moved through hills and jungles by the shortest routes. Rivers like the Chambal, the Betwa and the Narbada did not hamper his progress. For weeks he did 30 to 40 miles a day. He marched between the enemy columns, behind them and in front of them. Malleon has correctly remarked - "he (Tatya Tope) was a guerilla leader, content to fire at the enemy and then run away".<sup>10</sup>

William Howard Russell, the celebrated war correspondent of those days wrote : "Our very remarkable friend, Tatya Tope, is too troublesome and clever enemy to be admired... Up mountains, over rivers, through ravines and valleys, amid swamps, on he goes, backwards and forwards, sideways and zigzag ways... yet evasive as Proteus".<sup>11</sup>

#### ACHIEVEMENTS

Tatya Tope was one of the most remarkable leaders that India has ever produced. His plans - Napoleonic in conception though not in execution, reveal his strategic insight. Two of his plans - to capture the great rock fortress of Gwalior and to make a dash to the Deccan, are admirable testimonies of his ability as a great strategist. Apart from these audacious schemes, his strategy was governed by the basic



principle - to destroy the enemy base and to disrupt his lines of communication. He consistently followed this strategy and gave it up only when he was defeated at Kanpur on December 6, 1857.

Tatya Tope was not only a great strategist but a skilful tactician too. The fundamental foundation of his tactics was based on the theory of preserving his army intact without risking its rout in a single decisive battle, because he wanted to exhaust his enemy. His skilful tactics enabled him to extricate his forces from untenable positions. Tatya's series of engagements hampered Havelock's advance for a long and without much loss he was able to extricate his forces ~~xx~~ safely from Kanpur on July 16, 1857. In the battle of Kanpur (December 6, 1857) and in the battle of Betwa (April 1, 1858) he exhibited his master skill by extricating his forces. In fact Tatya Tope's genius lay not in fighting pitched battles, but in carrying out successful rear-guard actions to cover the retreat of troops.

In January 1858, Tatya Tope laid siege of Charkhari, which along with its fort fell to him in the beginning of March. This siege was conducted by Tatya Tope in such a masterly skill that on March 4, 1858, Mr. J.H. Carne, the Assistant Magistrate at Charkhari wrote the following dispatch to the Governor-General :

The enemy conducted all their operations very ~~xx~~ systematically... They could afford their relief parties, while some fought, others rested, as one set was observed going away, another was seen coming to take their places, even during the continuance of the conflict. They had their bugle calls during the last grand assault, and each separate band of matchlockmen was led on and performed its assigned task under the tuition evidently of some of the smartest sepoys who had been instructed by us in the art of war. They had their hospital doolies, and they appeared to have a large and well-regulated bazar with abundance of supplies. They, in short, displayed all the active energies of the battle field.<sup>12</sup>



Tatya Tope earned ranked leadership and fame due to his achievements as a guerilla leader, which enabled him to outwit the British forces for almost a year. His daring, initiative, counterstrokes and miraculous escapes baffled all the British Commanders who were pursuing him from place to place. An officer who took part in the operations to bes<sup>ce</sup>iege Tatya Tope wrote :

Each fresh commandant who took the field fancied he could catch Tantia, prodigious marches were made, officers and men threw aside all baggage, even their tents and accomplished upwards of forty miles daily- the rebels did fifty. The end was, all our horses were sore-backed, and the halt of a week or ten days rendered absolutely necessary. Then came a new aspirant for a C.E. and Tantia's head, who brought fresh troops and camels into the field... It was wonderful the amount of energy that was thrown into the pursuit... On they went until dead beaten. Occasionally someone more fortunate than the rest had the luck to catchup the fugitives and cut up stragglers, but it was always in heavy jungle, they had the very best information and never trusted themselves to the open country when any force was near. We had the very worst of information even in the territories of professedly friendly Rajas. The sympathy of the people was on their side.<sup>13</sup>

The assessment of the character and achievements of Tatya by the above British officer is more or less fair and judicious. Sir George Forrest considered Tatya Tope to be the ablest nationalist leader for he possessed remarkable power of organisation. It is said that although he had all the ability to plan a good scheme he had not the tenacity to carry it out.<sup>14</sup> Malleeson writes about him, "All the qualities that he displayed would have been admirable, had he combined with them the capacity of the general and the daring of an aggressive soldier... He was a guerilla leader, content to fire at the enemy and then run away".<sup>15</sup>

Tatya's evaluation by Kaye and Malleeson, though to some extent is justified, but it seems to be unkind because the authors have overlooked the fact that Tatya had no formal military training and experience of actual warfare, before he was called



upon to fight against veteran commanders. Viewed in this context, Taty's achievements make him the greatest politico-military leader of the first war of India's Independence.

#### HAD INDIA HAD MORE TATYAS ?

During the first war of Indian Independence "the only gifted leader thrown ~~up~~ by the army was Tantie Topi"<sup>16</sup> A man with an army of indifferent sorts, surrounded on all sides, yet keeping a posse of world famous redoubtable generals playing hide and seek for months together, has hardly any parallel in the history of warfare. He had the power of planning, <sup>e</sup>divising and controlling, the unsurpassable gift of concentration, and above all the high quality of never knowing that he was beaten. A renowned modern British historian, Percy Cross Standing not only ranked Taty's Tope amongst the most famous guerilla leaders of the world, but he also bestowed on him the highest praise by remarking that he "was by far the biggest brain produced on the native side <sup>by</sup> ~~of~~ the Mutiny... A few more like him and India had inevitably been wrested ~~xxx~~ from <sup>the</sup> English".<sup>17</sup>

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- <sup>2</sup> Hilton, op. cit., pp. 193-94.
- <sup>3</sup> Letter to Maj. Meade, Poona, dated 14.1.1960. quoted by Thornton, T.H. : General Sir Richard Meade.
- <sup>4</sup> Sylvester, op. cit., pp. 198-99.



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- 7 Earle, ~~G.M. : Makers of Modern Strategy (1952)~~, p. 87.
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